

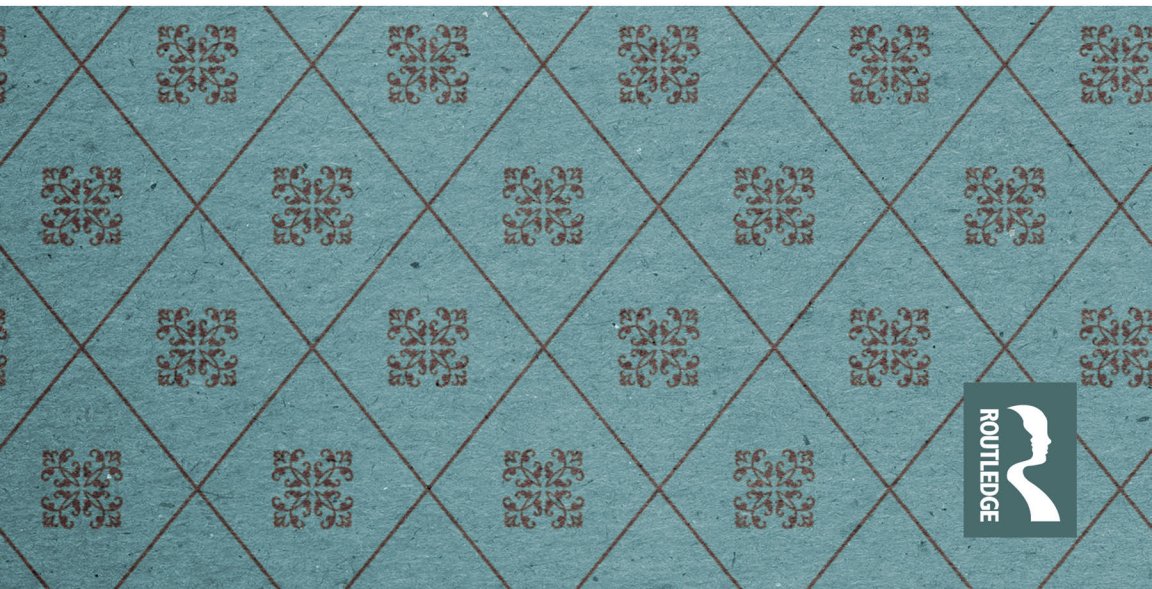


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THE INSULAR GOSPELS

Jennifer O'Reilly



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Dr Jennifer O'Reilly

(1943–2016)

Dr Jennifer O'Reilly lectured on medieval history in University College Cork between 1975 and her retirement in 2008. Her scholarly interests and publications lay principally in three areas: the iconography of early Irish and Anglo-Saxon art, the writings of Bede the Venerable and Adomnán of Iona, and the *Lives* of Thomas Becket. In these areas she explored the intimate relations between medieval texts and images and the traditions of biblical exegesis shaped by the Church Fathers. Her teaching inspired generations of students, many of whom went on to complete doctorates under her supervision. In retirement she continued to write extensively, and she gave numerous public lectures, including the Jarrow Lecture and the Brixworth Lecture. She was a Member of the Royal Irish Academy and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Her collected essays are published in the Variorum series in three volumes: *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*; *Early Medieval Text and Image 1: The Insular Gospel Books*; *Early Medieval Text and Image 2: The Codex Amiatinus, the Book of Kells and Anglo-Saxon Art*.

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PREFACE

When she died in 2016, Jennifer O'Reilly left behind a body of published work in three areas of medieval studies: the iconography of the manuscript art produced in early medieval Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England; the writings of Bede and his older Irish contemporary, Adomnán of Iona; and the early lives of Thomas Becket. In these three areas she explored the connections between historical texts, artistic images and biblical exegesis. This book brings together her essays on the Insular gospel books. It is one of three volumes of her collected essays published in the Variorum series. The others are: *Early Medieval Text and Image 2: The Codex Amiatinus, the Book of Kells and Anglo-Saxon Art and History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*. In each volume endnotes have been converted in to footnotes, and the pagination of the original publications is indicated in the text by bold numbers within square brackets.

The editors wish to thank the National University of Ireland, the UCD College of Arts and Humanities Research Fund, and the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Science in University College Cork for grants towards the costs of publication. They also thank those who have encouraged and helped them in their task, especially the late Professor Bernard Hamilton, Professor Jo Story, Professor Michelle Brown, Professor Jane Hawkes, Dr Rachel Moss, Dr Dermot Roantree, Professor Éamonn Ó Carragáin and Professor Terence O'Reilly. They owe a particular debt of gratitude to Tom O'Reilly, who laid at their disposal his expertise as a publisher, and worked tirelessly to see the book through production.

INTRODUCTION

Sign and Incarnation: The Art-Historical Scholarship of Jennifer O'Reilly

Jennifer O'Reilly's first art historical publications struck a resonant chord. If today one revisits the scholarship of Insular and late Anglo-Saxon art history in the 1980s, one would probably be struck by its spare methodology. Art historians directed their questions at the origins of the Insular art style and identifiable iconographic types. They were much concerned, too, with individual manuscripts' dates and places of origin, most often envisioning a linear stylistic development. The discipline by and large projected questions motivated by modern concerns of connoisseurship and the traditions of a discipline that originated in modern times, its methods usually limited by those of archaeology with its aversion to literary studies. While the already richer iconographic study of late Anglo-Saxon art benefitted from a higher rate of manuscript survivals and slightly more plentiful textual sources, only a minority of scholars of the earlier period explored questions of meaning within the larger contexts of medieval Britain and Ireland.¹ Two German art historians, Victor Elbern and Karl Werckmeister, had interpreted Insular manuscript art within the textual environment of early medieval monasticism.² Robert Deshman and Suzanne Lewis presented iconographic analyses that

- 1 Extant primary texts for Anglo-Saxon England post 870 include the *Regularis Concordia*, the Durham *Collectar*, Ælfric's writings and other historical, hagiographic, liturgical and exegetical texts. Textual sources for Irish manuscript contexts become more numerous after the ninth century, but relationships of these to the iconography and decoration of contemporary book art remain mostly unexplored until later medieval works such as Giraldus Cambrensis's *History and topography of Ireland*. By the 1980s Barbara Raw had published iconographic studies such as 'The Dream of the Rood and its connections with Early Christian art', *Medium Ævum* 39 (1970): 239–56, and in 1990 an important iconographic study, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion iconography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University). Moreover, Jane Rosenthal ('Three drawings in an Anglo-Saxon pontifical: anthropomorphic Trinity or threefold Christ?', *Art Bulletin* 63.4 [Dec. 1981]: 547–62) and Robert Deshman (see fn 3), were engaged in interdisciplinary studies of tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon art.
- 2 Victor Elbern, 'Die Dreifaltigkeitsminiatur im Book of Durrow', in *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 17 (1955): 5–42; O.K. Werckmeister, 'Die Bedeutung der Chi-Initialeseite im Book of Kells', in *Das erste Jahrtausend: Kultur und Kunst im werdenden Abendland an Rhein und Ruhr* 2, ed. Victor Elbern (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1964), 687–710; idem, *Irish-northumbische Buchmalerei des 8. Jahrhunderts und monastische Spiritualität* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967).

pushed forward connections between art and monastic culture, while C.R. Dodwell assembled mentions of art in Anglo-Saxon sources, a little-used critical lens to study the objects and their reception.³ In 1987, George Henderson published a ground-breaking book-length study of Insular gospel books aiming to open Insular manuscript art to larger contextual questions.⁴ Appearing within that world of object-oriented connoisseurship with its inchoate desire for richer understanding of medieval significance, Jennifer O'Reilly's writings had a freshness and impressive depth that arose from her unassuming approach, her natural eloquence and a unique methodology that had its basis in a key patristic interpretative approach to scripture, an approach requiring profound knowledge of scripture and early Christian commentaries. This Introduction will provide in roughly chronological order short critiques of her most important papers and essays on Insular and late Anglo-Saxon art, in an attempt to place Jennifer's scholarship in the late twentieth- and twenty-first-century historiography of early medieval art. The aim here is to make clear the originality of her work and the importance of her publications.

Jennifer's insight into the minds of early medieval monastic thinkers – both the artists and the producers of texts through which the artists and viewers experienced their visual creations – was based upon the patristic contemplative practice of linking together chains of biblical texts, the form of prayer-like exegesis known as the *catena*, to reveal scripture's underlying spiritual meaning that was hidden from the literal reader. The patristic *catena* tradition was maintained over centuries through associations of texts that made such profound and unified sense of scripture that these 'chains' were considered kernels of insight into divine truth. This patristic tradition, which interpreted the Bible through spiritual sense, brought to light the unity and true, divine eloquence of scripture. The texts linked together were things said so well that they were unsurpassable, patristic and early medieval thought seeing them as to be built upon rather than superseded. Thus, the *catena* as revelation of the 'relationship between historical and spiritual reality, society and individual, time and eternity' was the supporting fabric of early Christian literature and art.⁵ Present in all her publications, this text-based method of image interpretation had important methodological companions. Jennifer's ability to reveal thematic unities in visually complex objects such as manuscripts

3 Robert Deshman, 'The Leofric Missal and tenth-century English art', *Anglo-Saxon England* 6 (1977), 145–73; idem, 'The imagery of the Living Ecclesia and the English monastic reform', in *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. Paul Szarmach (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1986), 261–82 (both reprinted in *Eye and mind: collected essays in Anglo-Saxon and early medieval art by Robert Deshman*, ed. Adam S. Cohen (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2010), 58–80, and 80–91); Suzanne Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy: the Chi Rho page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio* 36 (1980): 139–59; C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon art: a new perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1982).

4 George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: the Insular Gospel-books 650–800* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987).

5 Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'écriture* 1 (Paris: Aubier, 1959), p. 17, cited and translated in Robert Wilken, 'In Dominico eloquio: learning the Lord's style of language', *Communio* 24.4 (1997): 846–66, at 847–48.

received support from the holistic approach brought to prominence by Patrick McGurk, who saw the relationships between manuscripts' physical and graphic structures and pointed to their many significances.⁶ She also looked to Robert Deshman's profound iconographic studies of late Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian art in revealing the 'kernel within the word' that was the intended deeper significance of Insular art.

Jennifer began her university studies in the early 1960s when a revival of patristics was among the forces shaping the ecumenical movement of Vatican 2 in the Roman Catholic Church. Since the 1940s, twentieth-century French Jesuits Jean Daniélou and Henri de Lubac, along with the Benedictine Jean Leclercq, were reinvigorating interest in spiritual exegesis, publishing studies of the typological interpretations of Old Testament events found in early Christian commentaries of writers such as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory the Great and Bede.⁷ Having researched and written her PhD thesis on the medieval iconography of the virtues and vices, Jennifer had already achieved an impressive knowledge of the verbal and visual traditions of spiritual interpretation from patristic to early renaissance times well before the appearance of her first art historical publications.⁸ Moreover through her doctoral work on the themes of the *Psychomachia* she had a strong grasp of the longevity of exegetical traditions and the doctrines, devotional forms and liturgical practices which maintained them. Influenced by the mid twentieth-century French monastic scholars, Jennifer developed a methodology that entered the realm of medieval art via the thought world of patristic authors and the early medieval exegetes who continued the tradition of the scriptural catena. The eighth-century Northumbrian monk, Bede, eventually became an especially beloved focus of her research.

Jennifer was often urged by friends to publish a book on Bede, Insular art or one of the great manuscripts such as the Book of Kells or the Codex Amiatinus,

6 Patrick McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books: from AD 400 to AD 800* (Paris: Éditions 'Érasme', 1961); 'Two Notes on the Book of Kells and its relation to other Insular Gospel Books', *Scriptorium* 9 (1955): 105–7; 'The Irish Pocket Gospel Book', *Sacris Erudiri* 8 (1956) 249–70; 'The Gospel Book in Celtic lands before AD 850: contents and arrangement', in P. Ni Chatháin and M. Richter, eds, *Irland und die Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 166–89; 'An Anglo-Saxon bible fragment of the late eighth century, royal I.E.VI', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 25, 1–2 (1962): 18–34. Reprinted in Patrick McGurk, *Gospel Books and Early Latin Manuscripts*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), nos VI (Introduction), I, IV, II, VII.

7 For example, Jean Daniélou, *Platonism et théologie mystique: essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Aubier, 1944); *ibid*, *Sacramentum futuri: études sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1950); *ibid*, *Bible et liturgie: la théologie biblique des sacraments et des fêtes d'après les Pères de l'Église* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1958); Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*; Jean Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu: initiation aux auteurs monastiques du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1959); *ibid*, *Aux sources de la spiritualité occidentale* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964).

8 'Studies in the iconography of the Virtues and Vices in the Middle Ages', University of Nottingham, 1972. Reprinted New York: Garland, 1988, in the Garland series Outstanding Theses in the Fine Arts from British Universities.

but she always seemed to dismiss the thought as pointless or just not what she wanted to do. The volumes of her essays on early medieval Irish and British art and the collection of her publications on historical and literary topics will be the closest we will ever get to the book we all would have welcomed with great excitement and gratitude. The essays on medieval art published together in these *Variorum* volumes represent an impressive record of publication not because of their number but because such a large proportion were ground-breaking and continue to be widely influential. Decades after publication of her first articles on the Book of Kells, portable altars, late Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion iconography and the Codex Amiatinus, one would be hard-pressed today to find a recent publication on these topics that does not reference them as essential discussions.

The twenty-six art historical essays are here collected into a pair of companion books, under the shared title *Early Medieval Text and Image*, the first collection with the subtitle *The Insular Gospel Books* (nine essays) and the second subtitled *The Codex Amiatinus, the Book of Kells and Anglo-Saxon Art* (seventeen essays). The category on which she most often wrote, Insular gospel manuscripts, is the unifying subject of the present volume. Here 'Insular' is taken to include art from Ireland and Britain from the seventh century to the late ninth century, that is before Alfred the Great in Britain and the stylistic shift of much Irish art that occurred in the late ninth or tenth century. The volume in fact begins with an essay that focuses on a late Anglo-Saxon ivory along with other Insular works, but it is appropriately placed at the beginning because in it Jennifer presented a detailed explanation of her methodology (see Chapter 1). Moreover, her important essay on an early twelfth-century Irish gospel manuscript connected by iconography and text with the Insular period (BL Harley MS 1802, the 'Gospels of Mael Brigte', Chapter 2) finds a place in this collection. Volume 2 collects her publications on the two great Insular manuscripts, the Codex Amiatinus and the Book of Kells, along with her essays on art from Anglo-Saxon England after King Alfred, some of which refer also to late Carolingian, Ottonian and Norman art. The arrangement sets out the wide scope of Jennifer's research in the art of the early middle ages and also offers the reader an insight into the relationships of the themes that over the length of her career held her attention and carried her ever more deeply into their significance. Several of these themes, most of which relate to the catena tradition of patristic commentaries and the liturgy, appear in her earliest publication.

Co-authored with inscriptions expert Elisabeth Okasha, Jennifer's first publication on early medieval Irish or Anglo-Saxon art is a study of an Anglo-Saxon portable altar of the second quarter of the eleventh century in the Musée de Cluny, Paris (Volume 2, Chapter 12).⁹ Her contribution is a lengthy section on the figures engraved on the silver gilt marginal mounts that frame the altar's porphyry slab: on the top edge, a Crucifixion presenting the dead Christ between an ox

9 'An Anglo-Saxon portable altar: inscription and iconography', *JWCI* 47 (1984): 32–51, at 35–51.

and an eagle; on the sides, the Virgin and St John, each above an archangel; and on the lower edge, the Agnus Dei within a medallion flanked by a winged man and a lion. These individual iconographic elements are distributed around the porphyry slab in the narrow space of the four mounts, at first glance appearing as incidental figures drifting uncomfortably on the frame-like mount's surface. Moreover, while a metrical inscription on the sides of the mount identifies each figure, the scheme is, according to the eleventh-century iconographic norm, unconventional if not disparate. Depiction of the dead Christ on the cross with the Lamb of God in the apocalyptic company of the four creatures on the same face of an object of that date is unusual. The obvious liturgical context of a portable altar provides for Jennifer the key to understanding the unusual iconography as a whole. After discussion of the type of the portable altar and a very thorough traditional iconographic analysis of each element, she shows the unity of the frame's set of engraved figures by her understanding of the typological structure of liturgical texts and rituals. Her analyses and interpretation moreover suggest a specific context of patronage for the altar. In the essay she explores the evangelist symbols, Crucifixion iconography, St John, the rough-hewn cross, eleventh-century devotional forms, the adoration of the cross, the earthly and heavenly liturgy, iconography of the Eucharist, and angelic intercessors, all of which she takes up in subsequent studies to dive even more deeply into the relatively unexplored seas of Insular and Anglo-Saxon text and image.

The Crucifixion with attendant figures and in its variant forms of the cross stands at the centre of much of Jennifer's scholarship. The essay that brought her scholarship to the attention of the international community of Insular art history originated as a paper on the Anglo-Saxon rough-hewn cross, delivered at the first international conference on Insular art, *Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500–1200*, in 1985 (Volume 2, Chapter 14).¹⁰ As a PhD student trying to further understanding of the Book of Kells in its early medieval liturgical context, I was deeply impressed by her method of entering the experience of early medieval viewers through devotional and liturgical forms. At least as notable in the paper is her articulation of the multiple and intersecting significances of a single iconographic type endowed with visual features having rich textual associations. Such an image, she gracefully points out, may reference simultaneously tangible artefact and cosmic dimension, individual devotion and universal salvation. Her insight into the inscription of a visual image with multiple and unifying associations is another of the sources of the originality of her 'text and image' method. The patristic exegetical context of the catena, underlying both theology and liturgy, propels her interpretations beyond the reach of conventional iconology.

A third essay published in the 1980s confirmed the importance of her text and image method. An iconographic study of Crucifixion themes based on an

10 'The rough-hewn cross in Anglo-Saxon art', in *Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500–1200*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987; reprinted 2002), 153–58.

influential chain of Old and New Testament texts, the journal article ‘Early medieval text and image: the wounded and exalted Christ’, presented an exposition of her methodology (Chapter 1). At the article’s beginning, she explains in detail the nature of the relationship in which she places text and image. The visual images, themselves often literally inscribed, converse with Biblical scripture, written exegetical commentary, and spoken and heard liturgical texts. ‘Early medieval text and image’ is Jennifer’s extended statement of ‘the expository relationship between text and image in early medieval and particularly Insular’ works of art. She clarifies the dynamics of ‘the chief activity of the monastic community, the *opus Dei*’ (of which the catena practice is a component), and she uses this exercise of scriptural reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation as a window into early medieval culture’s ‘imaginative process’, the believer’s spiritual interior always the target of the process. Her approach in seeing ‘iconography’ not as a static category of an art historian’s search nor the iconographic element as a thing to be circumscribed brings out with striking clarity the interactive nature of the words and images of the crucifixion. The central object of Jennifer’s study in this article is a small whalebone ivory relief (Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Z 15154 / 1883. 736) ‘supposedly’ found removed from its medieval context at North Elmham, in Norfolk, and dated to the eleventh century, although its closest extant iconographic relatives are of twelfth-century continental origin.¹¹ Not presenting a straightforward representation of the Crucifixion, the scene on the ivory merges elements referencing the wounded, resurrected, enthroned, eternally present and returning Christ. Its synthesis of elements alludes to liturgical texts in its inscription calling upon the believer to see and contemplate the wounds, *Vi[det]e manus et p[edes]* (Luke 24.39). The phrase has a place within a catena that invokes the viewer’s spiritual vision into the inner meaning of the texts. This activity of spiritual seeing interiorises connections of Old and New Testament typologies recognised from liturgical experience, leading to realisation of Christ’s earthly and heavenly presence and his promise of future judgment and salvation. Moreover, she shows the catena’s Late Antique origins, suggesting the likelihood that the plaque’s iconography did not depend on Carolingian models. Rather its history reaches back through the Insular period, ‘questioning the usual assumption that [the ivory plaque] is merely a precociously early representative of the Last Judgment iconographic type’.

Jennifer extended study of themes of cross, Crucifixion and apocalypse in her studies on Insular manuscripts, published after 1990. She had been working with her colleague and close friend Éamonn Ó Carragáin, had been working on the iconography of the full-page and minor decoration in the Book of Kells at least since coming to Cork, in 1975. At the second Insular art conference in January 1991,

11 See colour digital image, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, ‘Highlights’ website, http://maa.cam.ac.uk/maa-highlights/britainireland/saxon_mediaeval/index.html.

she presented her important paper 'The Book of Kells, Folio 114r: a mystery revealed yet concealed' (Volume 2, Chapter 5).¹² Her first published study focusing on an Irish work belonging to the Insular style, the paper appeared in the conference volume where it stands out methodologically from most of the other studies in which archaeological methods predominated and much of the art history was concerned with iconographic models or dating the objects.¹³ It stood out as well within its contemporary methodological context of art historical studies of medieval manuscripts. Literary theory was influencing some of the newest work, resulting in studies that aimed to deconstruct social and political contexts of visual art, notably the contexts of gender grounded in the feminism that had been brewing in art historical scholarship since the 1970s.¹⁴ Semiotic or sign theory, too, had a strong hold on the study of book art. Umberto Eco contributed to the understanding of the art of the Book of Kells, creating a significant link to modern literary theory in his studies of James Joyce, a brilliant and obsessive interpreter of the great gospel book's illuminated pages.¹⁵ Jennifer had little to do with the world of post-modern theory in her published work – even if she brought women's experience and social concerns into her teaching. Her 'word and image' approach remained constant through her publications, but it implied issues of reception and orality. She must have known of semiotic theory and Lacanian theory of gaze which are so prominent in early articles and books of Michael Camille, perhaps the most innovative historian of medieval art of her time.¹⁶ For

12 Published in the conference proceedings, *The age of migrating ideas: early medieval art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. R. Michael Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1993), 106–14.

13 There are some exceptions, notably in Section V 'Insular Sculpture', and many of the papers made significant contributions.

14 The seminal work: Linda Nochlin, 'Why have there been no great women artists?' in *Woman in sexist society: studies in power and powerlessness*, ed. Vivian Gornack and Barbara Moran (New York: Basic, 1971), reprinted in among others *Women, art and power and other essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 145–78. 'Gaze theory' rooted in the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan and first presented in relation to a visual medium by Laura Mulvey ('Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', *Screen* 16.3 (1975): 6–18) also began to influence some art historical scholarship of the later middle ages. Art historians who were approaching medieval art, mainly post-1100, through gender studies in their publications of the early 1990s include Madeline H. Caviness and Pamela Sheingorn.

15 Umberto Eco, 'A portrait of the artist as a bachelor', in *Talking of Joyce*, ed. Liberato Santoro-Brienza (Dublin: University College Dublin, 1998), 26–40. See also O.K. Werckmeister, 'Das Book of Kells in *Finnegans Wake*', *Neue Rundschau* 77 (1966): 44–63, and Meyer Schapiro's early essays *Words and pictures: on the literal and symbolic in the illustration of a text* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), reprinted in Meyer Schapiro, *Words, script and pictures: semiotics of visual language* (New York: George Braziller, 1996), 9–114.

16 Michael Camille, 'Seeing and reading: some visual implications of medieval literacy and illiteracy', *Art History* 8.1 (March 1985): 26–49; 'The book of signs: writing and visual difference in Gothic manuscript illumination', *Word and Image* 1 (1985): 133–48; *The Gothic idol: ideology and image-making in medieval art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989); *Image on the edge: the margins of medieval art* (London: Reaktion, 1992).

Jennifer, however, these psychological elements were always understood through the lens of the *opus dei*. Within the minds and emotions of the early medieval monastic audiences, texts heard and images seen worked toward spiritual goals of compunction and revelation of the divine. Alternative reactions against authority were subordinate to the process bound up with liturgical and exegetical texts that produced the art and its reception.¹⁷ So too did she, who took as her frequent subject the body and execution of Christ, never venture into the post-modern interpretation of images of fragmented bodies so eloquently proclaimed by historians of later art. One such scholar, Linda Nochlin, admitted their ‘tendency to forget that the human body is not just the object of desire, but the site of suffering, pain and death, a lesson that scholars of older art [. . .] can never ignore’.¹⁸

Jennifer understood the importance of the depiction of viewing and vision in early medieval art and its necessity to compunction, the penitential and devotional internalisation of verbal and visual images of Christ’s suffering and promise of salvation. In her earliest publications, she brought out the centrality of the theme of sight as the path to spiritual understanding as expressed in the images of the cross and Crucifixion with their accompanying *tituli* in the Cluny portable altar and the Cambridge whalebone ivory. Folio 114r in the Book of Kells, is also an inscribed image to which the idea of the power of vision is essential to its significance, but its contexts in many ways differ completely from those of the altar and the ivory. She sets the historical background of fol. 114r by pointing out correspondences with two related images, Betrayal and Arrest of Christ in the Carolingian Breton Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels and the Crucifixion picture in the Durham Gospels, each of which she studied in later publications. She argues that the X-shaped pose of Christ’s body represents an evocation of the Crucifixion which is restated in the arrangement of the words of Matthew 27:38 (*Tunc crucifixerant xpi cum eo duos latrones*) on folio 124r. Jennifer’s approach, grounded in the tradition of the catena, guided her insight into a unity of the images on folios 114r and 124r as expressions of the power of spiritual vision to recognise the true identity of Christ. She was thus able to bridge a significant gap in our knowledge of the contexts of two manuscripts far separated in date as are the Book of Kells and the Durham Gospels by drawing upon a patristic text-based practice to unveil an Insular kinship of the two inscribed images that interpreted the cross and Crucifixion. Moreover, she connected this interpretation and the ‘chain of texts’ with the contemporary liturgical texts that survive in the Stowe Missal. While she did not argue a specific liturgical context, she was able to show that the Stowe Missal’s liturgical text expressed a significance related to her explanation of the picture on folio 114r. Within the monasticism of early medieval Ireland, the picture

17 See her later essay, ‘The art of authority’, in *After Rome*, ed. Thomas Charles Edwards, The Short Oxford History of the British Isles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 141–89.

18 Linda Nochlin, *The body in pieces: the fragment as a metaphor of modernity*, 26th Walter Neurath Memorial Lecture (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 18.

was, as Jennifer understood it and communicated profoundly, an expression of the depth of scripture put before the reader – immersed in words and sounds – as a sign to be directly apprehended via sight.

The following year saw publication of her conference paper on the four surviving representations of St John as viewer and recording witness in late Anglo-Saxon crucifixion images (Volume 2, Chapter 13).¹⁹ Arguing that such figures can ‘offer an insight into how monks of the Benedictine reform read scripture’, Jennifer places the late tenth-century Ramsey Psalter’s Crucifixion frontispiece alongside the scriptural basis of a temporally layered theme of prophecy, Crucifixion and apocalyptic return.²⁰ In the picture, the crucified Christ, his wounds conspicuous, is flanked by an intensely mourning Virgin and exultant, upward-gazing St John, who inscribes his testimony of witness on an arcing scroll. The heavy cross spans the whole picture and displays a complete titulus ‘*hic est nazaren ihc rex iudeor[um]*’. Related to the catena explored in her paper on the Cambridge whalebone ivory plaque, the scriptural chain Zacharias 12.10, John 19.26.37, and Revelation 1.7 revolves around John’s authority as the recording witness of the Crucifixion. It is he who points to the prophetic text and envisions the future appearance of the wounded Christ as revelation of Crucifixion as enthronement and exaltation. Once again Jennifer moves beyond iconographic and iconological analysis in expanding Niver’s question of whether the oldest example, in the Ramsey Psalter, presents the prototype or the imaginative variant by ‘a great artist’. She shows that the figure of St John writing beside the crucified Christ was not only part of an affective devotional image but also within the context of late Anglo-Saxon Benedictine monasticism acted as a contemplative aid to spiritual interpretation exemplified by St John. The surviving Anglo-Saxon examples, she argues, testify to the richness of their background in the catenas of Benedictine contemplative traditions and the creativity of the artists who created the Crucifixion scenes.

Her method of understanding manuscript art through the typologies of the catena tradition revealed unity in the major and minor decoration in the Gospel of Luke in the Book of Kells, already glimpsed in her paper on folio 114r. The paper she presented at the Book of Kells conference in 1992 became a groundbreaking fifty-page essay arguing a thematic unity of the Lucan genealogy’s decoration with the full-page ‘Temptation of Christ’ picture on fol. 202v and the decorated incipit of Luke 4.1 that faces it (Volume 2, Chapter 7).²¹ Seeing thematic

19 ‘St John as a figure of the contemplative life: text and image in the art of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform’, in *St Dunstan, his life, times, and cult*, ed. N.L. Ramsay, M.J. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1992), 165–85. Presented in 1988.

20 British Library, Harley MS 2904, fol. 3v.

21 ‘The Book of Kells: text and image’ (the conference paper); ‘Exegesis and the Book of Kells: the Lucan genealogy’ in *The Book of Kells: Proceedings of a conference at Trinity College Dublin 6–9 September 1992*, ed. Felicity O’Mahony (Aldershot, Hants.: Scolar Press, 1994), 344–97. The reprint, a ‘shortened and slightly amended form of the finished paper’ in *Scriptural interpretation*

unity based on a chain of scriptural texts and commentaries on them, Jennifer's highly original argument was not in step with a prominent theoretical trend of the late 1980s and 1990s that argued for the presence of disunities and polyphony in medieval literature and art, especially in marginal decoration such as that in Kells' Lucan genealogy or in a figure such as Satan at the edge of the Temptation picture. Links between the small figures in the margins of the genealogy on folios 201r–202r with the picture of the Temptation of Christ on the Temple roof (202v) and the full-page incipit *I h s autem plenus spiritus sancto*, she argued, are references to recognition of Christ's institution of the sacraments as the son of God and a tribute to a holy man of prophetic vision, a priest of royal descent and apostolic stature, most probably Columba. The genealogy in Luke forms the central link of a series of passages: first the gospel's beginning story of the priest Zacharias who makes his offering at the altar, through the nativity story of Christ's incarnation and the baptism, followed immediately by the descent of the dove of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and the voice of God announcing recognition of his son. Luke gives a kind of commentary on this theme of divine sonship bearing the Holy Spirit as well as the Incarnation by presenting here – rather than at the gospel's incipit as in Matthew – the list of the ancestors of Christ, ending with 'Adam, son of God'. The phrase 'Jesus full of the Holy Spirit' begins the story of his temptation in the desert, at which point the Book of Kells presents the picture of the Temple with the bust of the tempted Jesus at its top. The picture is on the verso of the folio presenting the end of the genealogy and it faces the elaborately decorated folio bearing the incipit of the temptation story. Jennifer shows how the name *Columba* – in Latin, 'dove' – via the dove in the Hebrew name *Iona* and St Peter's name *Simon bar-Iona* is borne along in this chain in the Book of Kells with a multi-layered semiosis presented in carefully placed decoration and figures beginning with the 'fish-man' at the name *Iona* in the genealogy, and continuing through to the words 'Jesus then full of the Holy Spirit' on folio 203r. This section of Luke's text itself carries references to the chain of scriptural texts which are recognised in patristic and Insular commentaries and pointed out by Jennifer, including several passages from Hebrews 9, and key words and phrases in Psalm 126.1, 1 Peter 2.5, Ephesians 2.20–21, Acts 7.48, 17.24, John 2.19–22, Mark 14.58, 15.29, Matthew 26.61, 27.40, and others. The passages Ezekiel 47.1 and Revelations 22.1 are of special importance in linking the chain with the Tabernacle and Temple and in turn with the Crucifixion and apocalypse. These references ultimately show the origin of the sacraments and the significance of priesthood in the Crucifixion and divine revelatory commands. Origen, Ambrose, Bede and some Hiberno-Latin commentators provide the exegetical interface between scripture and catena, moreover to the art in folios 201v–203r in the Book of Kells. It is a tour de force tracing

in the Fathers: letter and spirit, Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey, eds. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1995), 315–55, appears in this volume; see her note on page 355 of the reprint giving the amendments to the original essay.

the complex interrelationships of text and image in Kells and a stunning eye-opener to its decoration's potential span over sections of folios as well as the depth of its art which encapsulates simultaneous references to past, present and future of priesthood, Church and Incarnation. This paper is rarely cited in scholarship probably because it presents a challenging read and because its argument is based on texts, not all of which are easily accessible, rather than visual evidence. Nonetheless it represents a huge step forward in recognition of Insular art's sophistication.

Following the two papers on the Book of Kells, Jennifer turned her art historical attention to Insular gospel manuscripts. Two papers published in 1998 take on the task of connecting Insular manuscript art with that of international Christianity but not with the usual stylistic comparisons that tend to give primacy to naturalistic representation. By showing Insular illumination's relationships in its graphic design, iconographic details and physical positioning relative to text, she put Insular manuscript art on a footing equal to that of Carolingian art, which is usually credited with greater sophistication. In 'Gospel harmony and the names of Christ: Insular images of a patristic theme' (Chapter 3), she took up the significance of the monogram of the sacred name, XP. Where the sacred name I h s in the Gospel of Luke in the Book of Kells had to do with the cosmic significance of his gospel in its accounts relating to baptism and priesthood, the Matthean XP monograms are enlarged and graphically elaborated to signify the incarnate Christ. Graphic presentation magnifies their significance at particular positions within Matthew's gospel: at the end of the list of ancestors and the emphatic phrase of Christ's human death on the cross 'between two thieves'. The implicit methodological underpinning of her interpretation was the semiotic that proceeds from patristic exegesis and was further developed in Hiberno-Latin and Insular writers, especially Bede. Once again signs of the cross – appearing in varying forms and degrees of abstraction – were central. Jennifer's account of the commentaries demonstrated, more clearly than any other previous attempt to explain it, the conspicuous emphasis on the sacred name monogram at Matthew 1.18 in Insular gospel manuscripts. Jennifer showed how the cross is reiterated through the text's decoration, including a peak in its restatement made at the X-shaped layout of the Crucifixion phrase at Matthew 27.38 in the Book of Kells. Her careful reading of the text of Matthew 27.38 in Kells, fol. 124, and in Hiberno-Latin exegesis put a spotlight on its variant, which adds the sacred name XPI.²² Addition of the sacred titulus in the Book of Kells and Hiberno-Latin commentaries thus referenced his royal title on the board attached to the cross at his crucifixion, reiterating the sign underlying the shape of the double-barred cross (now fol. 33r), which probably originally faced the XPI of Matthew 1.18. The complex interweaving of cross signs and references to the sacred names, as revealed by Jennifer, made up a unified statement of gospel harmony around the

22 *Tunc crucifixerant XPI cum eo duos latrones.*

cross- and quadripartite shapes of the sacred name in Greek letters, embodied overall in the four-part gospels, signified in four symbols pages and the two surviving evangelist portraits.

Her article 'Patristic and Insular traditions of the evangelists: exegesis and iconography' (Chapter 4) is probably even more important than 'Gospel harmony and names of Christ'. In this lengthy essay, Jennifer assembled the most complete compendium of relevant patristic and Hiberno-Latin commentaries and gave an encyclopaedic discussion of relationships to the seminal works by Irenaeus, Jerome, Eusebius, Augustine and Gregory. Near the beginning of the forty-page article she stated her 'limited objective' of making the Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition on the four gospels more well-known. Her article in fact goes far beyond that objective to argue with overwhelming textual and visual evidence the early sophistication and depth of the Insular tradition of the evangelists, showing its place in pre-Carolingian thought and visual expression, which in the Hiberno-Latin world tended to be aniconic more often than naturalistically representational. As if written for students of all levels, it begins with a survey of the scriptural origins of the evangelist symbols and their early interpretations that emphasised their semiosis of gospel harmony and the Incarnation. She includes an entry-level lesson in Eusebius's canon tables, and continues to present a number of crucial ideas and interpretations that had not been put together before her publication. In this article her catalogue of known Hiberno-Latin commentaries that deal with the four gospels, evangelists and symbols brings attention not only to those published but also those still unedited and unpublished. 'Patristic and Insular traditions of the evangelists: exegesis and iconography' surveys a stream of Insular thought that is central to manuscript art of the period. For this alone, it is a very important article. Furthermore, she wrote up very clear examples of the expression of these ideas in Insular manuscript art, bringing out relevant details and connections that had not been given much if any notice prior to her article's publication.

A companion essay for 'Patristic and Insular traditions of the evangelists', her article 'The Hiberno-Latin tradition of the evangelists and the Gospels of Mael Brigte' (Chapter 2) showed the place in Hiberno-Latin commentaries of an unpublished short exegetical text inscribed on a folio of the twelfth-century Gospels of Mael Brigte (London, British Library, Harley MS 1802, fol. 9r). Noting Jean Rittmueller's demonstration of parallels of the manuscript's interlinear and marginal gospel commentary – for which it is most well-known – with seventh- and eighth-century Hiberno-Latin compilations, Jennifer pointed out the ways in which the text and its position on folio 9r as well as its content gave decisive evidence that the early traditions of Irish monasticism and scriptural commentary lived on into the last decades before the Norman invasion. Her and Rittmueller's arguments presented a striking revision to the conventional thesis that the commentary and short text on fol. 9r were reflections of commentaries from the new international school at Paris and of Peter Lombard. Besides showing the continuity of early Irish cultural traditions through the changes of the ninth century and

later, Jennifer's article stood alone in presenting a modern study of post-Viking Irish manuscript art and textual layout. The decoration of Irish manuscripts made between the late ninth century and 1200 has received little comment since the study published in 1962 by Françoise Henry and Geneviève-Louise Micheli.²³ Moreover, 'The Hiberno-Latin tradition of the evangelists and the Gospels of Mael Brigte' provides a detailed compendium of patristic and early medieval exegetical traditions on the evangelist symbols that, along with 'Patristic and Insular Traditions of the evangelists' and the previously unpublished essay 'The St Gall Gospels: art and iconography' (Chapter 9), is the best reference for students and specialists on images of the evangelists and their symbols in Insular art.

The cross and four-part cosmological structure of heaven and earth remained underlying themes of Jennifer's art historical essays, and the catena continued to provide the conceptual underpinning of her methodology. After the 1990s she expanded her investigations into images for which the relationships were not so straightforward as depictions of the Crucifixion and evangelist symbols. In 2001 her essay on the images in the Codex Amiatinus was published (Volume 2, Chapter 1). One her most important publications, 'The library of Scripture: views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow'²⁴ presented an unconventional and detailed study of the 'scribal portrait' – usually called 'Ezra' because of the couplet inscribed above the picture – that is now folio 5v in the first quire of the enormous pandect (single-volume manuscript) of the Bible made along with two sister pandects during the abbacy of Ceolfrith (689–716) at Wearmouth-Jarrow. Two of the pandects went to the libraries of the twin monasteries to serve as authoritative scriptural references for Ceolfrith's high-level programme of Bible study, but the third, known today as the Codex Amiatinus, left Wearmouth in the hands of Ceolfrith and a delegation of monks to be taken to Rome, for presentation to the pope. Physical evidence from the manuscript shows that the picture of the scribe originally faced the dedication inscription, which gives the manuscript's origin at Ceolfrith's monastery and its intended destination, a gift for St Peter. The picture shows a scribe with a halo writing in an open codex and seated before a cupboard holding nine volumes labelled as books of the Bible. The first quire of the Codex Amiatinus presents a series of pictures and diagrams that include the portrait, a double-page inscribed diagram-like picture of the Tabernacle of Moses, three diagrams showing the order of the books of the Old and New Testaments according to Hilary and Epiphanius, Jerome, and Augustine, and a diagram of the books of the Pentateuch. The frontispiece to the New Testament presents a Maiestas, a portrait of Christ in the heavens accompanied by the four creatures and human figures, who may represent the evangelists or prophets. It is often assumed that

23 F. Henry and G.L. Marsh-Micheli, 'A century of Irish illumination (1070–1170)', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (C) 62 (1962): 101–64, plates II–XLIV.

24 In *New offerings, ancient treasures: studies in Medieval Art for George Henderson*, ed. Paul Binski and Will Noel (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 2001), 3–39.

most or all the pictures were modelled on ones in Cassiodorus's *codex grandior*, even though it is not certain that the old Latin pandect of the Bible that Ceolfrið had earlier brought back from Rome was in fact the *codex grandior* and moreover Cassiodorus mentioned only diagrams or pictures of the Temple (or Tabernacle, or both) and of the divisions of the books of the Bible according to Hilary, Jerome and Augustine. The scribe 'Ezra' would have been a portrait of Cassiodorus in his pandect, shown in the guise of Ezra writing the *codex grandior* before a book cupboard containing the volumes of his *novem codices*, an edition of the Old Latin text of the Bible created at his monastery at Vivarium. This interpretation has led to iconographic analyses searching for origins and efforts to confirm the identity of the scribe.

Jennifer's questions focused instead on the reception of the picture of the scribe at Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow and the eighth-century understanding of its relationship to the diagrams and inscriptions of Amiatinus's first quire. Her detailed argument made use of the inscriptions on the quire's folios, chains of scriptural texts mentioning scribes and their interpretations in patristic and early medieval commentaries, but the unifying feature was the figure of the armarium, the book cupboard, and its semiosis as container of the Torah scrolls, the ark, Moses's Tabernacle, the Temple, the Body of Christ and the heavenly Jerusalem. She never stated explicitly that her argument was based on semiotic theory, at least in part because the semiotic was not that of the twentieth century but rather the figures and signs used by commentators such as Origen, Augustine and Bede to explain the unity of the Old and New Testaments. The containers of scripture were in turn figures of the cosmos, with its cross-shaped frame and perfection of shape with four points, as in the visions of the creatures that Christian interpreters understood to be figures of the evangelists and their gospels. In her argument the scribe in the picture was a scribe of the divine within whom scripture was stored and inscribed upon the heart. He was a figure of those like Ezra who had become 'libraries of scripture' and so were true priests properly vested and worthy to enter the Tabernacle of divine knowledge. This argument not only demonstrated the thematic unity of the images of Amiatinus' first quire and New Testament frontispiece but further connected the whole of the images with the thought of Bede, monk of Wearmouth-Jarrow, who wrote extensive commentaries on the Tabernacle, Temple, Ezra's biblical book and others, and who also was immersed in the commentaries of Cassiodorus. Jennifer's great knowledge of the commentaries – in particular those of Bede and Cassiodorus – with her imaginative, original approach to the images and their inscriptions and her driving ability to communicate the complex interrelationships of images and inscriptions produced for us a brilliantly illuminated understanding of the early medieval reception of the pictures and diagrams in the Codex Amiatinus.

In a subsequent essay, "All that Peter stands for": the *Romanitas* of the *Codex Amiatinus* reconsidered' Jennifer took aim at other conventional and sometimes overly generalised theses about the great bible manuscript (Volume 2,

Chapter 4).²⁵ These present its classicising art style, late antique references and uncial script as either pointedly ideological or arising from the general monastic culture of Wearmouth-Jarrow, which emulated Mediterranean visual forms. In this essay, Jennifer connected the huge pandect's 'format, its monumental Roman script and antique art forms' in definite ways with the historical context of the church in late seventh- and early eighth-century Britain and specifically with Wearmouth-Jarrow, including Bede. She sought to qualify the thesis that ideology explains the Codex Amiatinus's departure from Insular art and script styles. The ecclesiastical background was deeper and wider than the single decision at Whitby to ally Northumbrian Christianity with the gatekeeper of heaven, who was the first bishop of Rome. Building on some of the themes of her earlier essays on the scribe and Insular interpretations of the classical characterisation of Ireland and Britain as islands 'at the ends of the earth' as well as her interpretations in 'Library of scripture' of the images in Amiatinus's first quire and its New Testament frontispiece, Jennifer introduced nearly unparalleled historical detail into discussion of the Wearmouth-Jarrow community's conception of the pandect Bible. In her seamless connection of the historical sources and the Codex Amiatinus's semi-otic visual forms, Jennifer gave us a nuanced vision of what the monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow intended to express in their great codex.

The seventh-century context of doctrine on the human and divine unified nature of Christ informed Jennifer's essay "'Know who and what he is": the context and inscription of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image', bringing to a new level our understanding of the inscribed picture of Christ's crucified body (Chapter 5). The earliest surviving full-page picture from Insular art that does not represent the evangelists or their symbols, the Crucifixion image is on the verso of the ending folio of Matthew 28 in a fragmentary gospel book of origins in a context with a strong Irish presence, probably in Ireland or possibly in Northumbria, in the late seventh or very early eighth century. Moreover, it is the most heavily inscribed of all surviving Insular full-page pictures. Jennifer pointed out the paradox it presents in its depiction of a living, majestic, glorified Christ clothed and posed as a divine priest beneath cherubim but, with his wounds visible, surrounded by figures of those who executed him, the spear-bearer and the sponge-bearer, and cryptic texts that tell of his humiliation and sacrifice. Themes from her earliest publications return: the interaction of reading and seeing in the intended reception of this 'great icon of the body of Christ', the catena of texts linked to the scriptural call to contemplate the wounds of the crucified Christ, and the ekphrastic power of inscriptions in early medieval art. Its position on the verso of the manuscript's folio bearing the framed text of Christ's mandate to the apostles to baptise all people in the name of the persons of the trinity was key to its significance within its seventh- to early eighth-century context. Jennifer saw that the inscriptions and

25 In *Anglo-Saxon and Irish Relations before the Vikings*, ed. James Graham-Campbell and Michael Ryan, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 157 (Oxford 2009), 367–95.

details of the image referred to the continuing controversies over the nature of Christ addressed in Leo the Great's *Tome* issued at the Council of Chalcedon (451). She connects the ideas referenced in the inscriptions to passages in Columbanus' *Regula monachorum* and his letter on the mysteries of salvation, that is that the image of the suffering and sacrifice of Christ is both the example and the sign of salvation. She pointed out the history of the provincial councils such as Hatfield (679) which affirmed the Chalcedonian tradition which laid down the doctrine of the trinity and the dual natures of Christ. The essay's outstanding importance rests on Jennifer's detailed account of the picture's early medieval theological context and her eloquent synthesis of the meaning of the enigmatic inscriptions with the image's invocation of the viewer's spiritual vision. She returned to the late seventh-century reception of the Durham Gospels' Crucifixion picture in two essays 'The image of orthodoxy, the *mysterium Christi* and Insular Gospel books' (Chapter 6) and 'Seeing the crucified Christ: image and meaning in early Irish manuscript art' (Chapter 8) which included discussions of other Insular depictions of the Crucifixion, including the full-page picture in the St Gall 51 Gospels where it is one half of a diptych, facing an image of the 'risen and ascended Christ in the glory of his *parousia* or Second Coming'.

The St Gall Gospels were the subject of one of her last essays (Chapter 9), unfinished at the time of her death and published here in *The Insular Gospel Books* for the first time. Within an extended discussion of the manuscript's decoration, her focus was on the evangelist portraits and the pair of full-page pictures, the Crucifixion and 'Christ and the Twelve Apostles' (the Ascension and Second Coming). She successfully showed the theological and visual unity of the pictures of the evangelists and their symbols, despite the differences in their figural styles and details of their iconography. Where others have explained their variety as a deficiency resulting from a lack of resources and appropriate models, Jennifer saw a deliberate series of variations appropriate to the voice of each evangelist as revealed in patristic and Insular commentaries. Her method of following the chains of texts that run through early medieval theological thought once again opened up a new vision of the unity and completeness of Insular depictions of the evangelists where traditional iconographic analysis of types and elements provided only partial understanding. Moreover, in her essay on the St Gall Gospels Jennifer based her argument on visual analysis to a greater degree than in her earlier work. She looked carefully at the relationships of colours, compositions, lines and shapes in the evangelist pictures and the full-page incipits facing them, but in her exposition of the unity of the Crucifixion and Ascension/Parousia ('Christ and the Twelve Apostles') her analytic visual comparisons are crucial. Even in its unfinished state, the essay is a treasure trove of learning, providing an extraordinary guide to primary textual evidence relating to the iconography of the evangelists, Crucifixion, Ascension and Second Coming (Parousia). Throughout she planted nascent discussions of features of exegesis not widely known even to specialists, such as her excursus into the patristic theme of Hebrew identity of the evangelist Matthew, the richness of his Old Testament references and its early

INTRODUCTION

medieval exegesis. Quite a substantial amount of such material that she meant to return to remains, but a separate section of notes at the original essay's end, on some thoughts not yet incorporated, had to be omitted from this first publication. The editors have added a few comments in footnotes and have tried to complete and update the references.

This Introduction represents an attempt to clarify Jennifer O'Reilly's contributions to late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century history of early medieval art. Not all her essays have been discussed individually even though all present Insular and later Anglo-Saxon art with fresh vision and eloquent discussion. Some will offer to a general audience an unequalled introduction to an art that for all its beauty is not easy to understand and an enjoyable window onto the culture and thought world of the early middle ages. The collections of her art historical essays in the two volumes of *Early Medieval Text and Image* are intended to provide a useful research resource for specialists in all areas of medieval studies. Moreover, the collected essays may provide a valuable teaching resource for learning at all levels: even her most detailed and scholarly essays usually begin with instruction in the features of early medieval manuscripts and in the primary literature. Jennifer O'Reilly relentlessly explored the significance of the visual in early medieval Christianity and she communicated that significance with a voice of inspiring eloquence.

Carol A. Farr

EARLY MEDIEVAL TEXT AND IMAGE

The wounded and exalted Christ

The ancient rhetorical association between verbal eloquence and visual art, used by fourth-century Greek Fathers and Byzantine iconodules alike and evident in the rhetorical techniques employed in Byzantine art, also influenced early Western defenders of religious images. As is well known, in *De templo* II Bede, following Gregory the Great, explains that pictures provide a living writing, or ‘a living reading of the Lord’s story for those who cannot read’.¹ Art was not primarily regarded as a pictorialisation of a textual narrative for the unlettered however, but was recognised as having the power to inspire devotion, compunction and amendment of life. Bede’s *Historia abbatum* 6 tells how all who entered the church at Monkwearmouth, even the illiterate, were able, through pictures, to contemplate Christ and his saints, scenes of the gospels and the Apocalypse and, prompted by the depiction of the Last Judgement before their eyes, be brought to examination of conscience.

This attitude to art shares in Bede’s declared aim in the preface to the *Historia ecclesiastica* of providing good examples for *imitatio* and of encouraging the religious listener or reader to avoid all that is sinful. It offers a parallel to the verbal art of the unlettered poet Caedmon described in book 4:24. When any passage of scripture was expounded to him by the learned, Caedmon would render it into moving verse in his own tongue, turning his instructors into listeners and prompting many folk to despise the world and to long for heavenly things. His verses on [72] the blessings and judgements of God in particular consciously sought to turn his hearers from evil and to inspire them to love and to do good. Not only could such art, whether verbal or visual, have a devotional or penitential rather than a narrowly didactic or narrative function, it could also offer a meditative interpretation of the sacred text which provided its subject matter. Bede’s famous image of Caedmon, *quasi mundum animal ruminando*, transforms the poet from a versifier of vernacular translations or paraphrases of scripture into a ‘clean beast’, inspired to ruminate constantly on the divine word, separating the letter from the spirit, as in the monastic practice of *lectio divina*. Similarly, when describing a set

1 Henry Maguire, *Art and eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton 1981) 9–12. *De templo* II, CCSL 119A, 212–13; Paul Meyvaert, ‘Bede and the church paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979) 63–77: 68–69.

of pictures which Benedict Biscop had imported for the monastery of Jarrow (*Historia abbatum* 9), Bede explicitly illustrates their typological (not chronological or narrative) pairing of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, thus providing evidence for the use in monumental art of an exegetical technique deriving from a complex literary tradition. Like texts, such pictures must have been ‘read’ at different levels of sophistication.

Early medieval churchmen’s pedagogical sanctioning of art (‘so that the illiterate can at least read by looking at the walls’) implies the art of church and baptistery interiors in fresco, mosaic and on panel.² However, relatively little monumental art has survived from before the Romanesque mural cycles and great exterior sculptural programmes of the twelfth century. Earlier, in addition to Insular stone crosses, the most characteristic survivals are illuminated manuscripts, carved ivories and precious metalwork, mostly with a liturgical function and a monastic context. A feature of this *ars sacra* is its frequent inclusion of the written word. While inscriptions can operate as simple captions or labels for supplementary identification of the image’s subject matter, or for the intercessory or commemorative purposes of artist or patron, the written word itself, calligraphically embellished or mysteriously contracted to a potent sign such as the *nomen sacrum*, is often used to invest an object or image with significance and power. It may reasonably be argued that identification of an inscription from any one of these categories need not demonstrate any high degree of literacy, but some inscriptions clearly do presuppose an audience not only familiar with the written word but with particular ways of reading texts. Such an inscription does not redundantly transpose into another language what its accompanying image already conveys through pictorial and iconographic conventions, but can complete or amplify the sense through techniques also used in liturgy and exegesis. This category of art, which emphatically did not function as visual aids for the illiterate, offers a wealth of primary material for the historian of monastic culture.

The present paper explores some aspects of the expository relationship between text and image in early medieval and particularly Insular works through a study of the origins and iconography of the image of the wounded and exalted Christ. The example depicted on an inscribed Anglo-Saxon ivory (Figure 1.1) may provide a unifying framework for the discussion. The eschatological image of Christ enthroned in glory and displaying the wounds of the passion was a patristic and [73] homiletic commonplace, but did not become widely popular in visual art

2 Ep. IX 208, XI 10: L. M. Hartmann (ed), *Gregorii I Papae Registrum epistolarum* ii, MGH Epistolae (1978) 195, 270; *Historia abbatum* 6: C. Plummer (ed), *Beda Opera historica* (Oxford 1896) 369–70; *Beda Opera*, parts III/IV, *Hom.* I, 13: D. Hurst (ed), *CCSL* 122 (1955) 93. Other examples in P. Riché, *Education and culture in the barbarian West* (Columbia SC 1978) 489–90. George Henderson, ‘Bede and the visual arts’ (Jarrow Lecture 1980) 13–17; C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon art: a new perspective* (Manchester 1982) 84–92; John Higgitt, ‘Words and crosses: the inscribed stone cross of early medieval Britain and Ireland’, J. Higgitt (ed), *Early medieval sculpture in Britain and Ireland*, Br Archaeol Rep 152 (Oxford 1986) 125–52 for a discussion of implied function, audience and readership of such inscribed monumental art.



Figure 1.1 Inscribed carved panel depicting the wounded and enthroned Christ. Anglo-Saxon whalebone ivory, probably late tenth century. Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, no Z 15154.

until its standard incorporation in the twelfth-century iconography of the Last Judgement. The first section of this paper surveys the ivory's late Anglo-Saxon context and its analogues amongst twelfth-century works, questioning the usual assumption that it is merely a precociously early representative of the Last Judgement iconographic type. Section II considers the exegesis and iconography of the image of enthronement and the possible reasons why the only extant precedent for the ivory's depiction of the wounded and enthroned Christ appears (in the *Æthelstan Psalter*, fol. 21, Figure 1.2) in the context of the Parousia rather than the Last Judgement itself. Sections III and IV survey the other contexts in which



Figure 1.2 Æthelstan Psalter. © The British Library Board. Cotton MS Galba A.xviii, fol. 21r.

Christ's wounds were depicted in early medieval art – the crucifixion and two of the resurrection appearances – to see what light their exegesis and iconography can throw on the formulation and meaning of the Anglo-Saxon ivory's design. Sections V and VI discuss the exegetical chain of Old and New Testament texts isolated during this investigation. The chain links Christ's prophesied wounding at the crucifixion, his resurrection appearances, his enthronement and Second Coming. Illustrations of the texts' most common liturgical, literary and pictorial application in early medieval monastic culture suggest how they may have been read and offer a further key to understanding the inscribed image on the Anglo-Saxon ivory as a piece of highly allusive pictorial exegesis.

This is not, then, an exercise in spotting a 'source' for the Anglo-Saxon ivory, but in trying to understand something of the imaginative processes of a culture which perpetuated the topoi of an inherited exegetical tradition, but could also use that tradition to make new associations or creatively re-state established themes. There are obvious difficulties in knowing how representative surviving unique objects may once have been, and in knowing exactly which books, let alone what

visual images would have been familiar to any particular monastic community, hence the modern iconographer's recourse to citing the major Fathers and their popularisers and inheritors, notably Bede and Ælfric, whose tradition may reasonably be assumed to have been known. It can be shown, however, that the particular themes and expository techniques proposed here for the ivory's design were not only available in some general inherited exegetical tradition and reflected in other pictorial works, but were familiar through the chief activity of the monastic community, the *opus Dei*, and specifically through the office and liturgy of Holy Week and Easter.

The lavish production of manuscripts and liturgical objects during the Anglo-Saxon monastic reform, from the early leadership of Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury (960–88), Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester (963–84) and Oswald, bishop of Worcester (961–91), through to the eve of the Norman Conquest, was recently demonstrated in a major exhibition at the British Museum, whose exhibits constituted only a fraction of what is known, from documentary sources, to have been produced in the later tenth and early eleventh centuries.³ The carved and inscribed whalebone ivory panel or plaque, supposedly found at North Elmham in East Anglia and now in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology [74], derives from this monastic reform period (Figure 1.1).⁴ Discovered out of context, its precise date and even its function have never been established and the epigraphic evidence apparently suggests nothing more precise than 'the tenth or eleventh century'.⁵ The hieratic, symmetrical composition is arranged in registers employing different scales, reminiscent of Early Christian ivories, and it lacks the expressively attenuated figural proportions, animated gestures and fluttering draperies commonly associated with 'the Winchester style'. However, a number of iconographic details are closely comparable to two drawings of known Winchester origins and dated c. 966 and c. 1030, as will be seen. Moreover, Anglo-Saxon art encompasses considerable stylistic variety and, in a restrained form, the ivory has several features which find similarities in the work of the period, particularly the tenth century.⁶ Enlivening surface effects have been badly abraded

3 J. Backhouse, D.H. Turner, L. Webster (ed), *The golden age of Anglo-Saxon art 966–1066* (British Museum catalogue 1984). C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon art: a new perspective* (Manchester 1982) 216–21 for documentary evidence of the large-scale loss of church treasures at the Norman Conquest.

4 No Z 15154. I wish to thank the Museum's Director, Dr D. Phillipson, for his kind permission to examine the ivory and publish the photograph. M. Longhurst, *English ivories* (London 1926) 6–7, 71–72; J. Beckwith, *Ivory carvings in early medieval England* (London 1972) cat. 18, pl 41.

5 E. Okasha, *Hand-list of Anglo-Saxon non-runic inscriptions* (Cambridge 1971) no 97.

6 The New Minster foundation charter frontispiece (c. AD 966, pl 4) and the Benedictional of St Æthelwold (c. 970–80) provide, in a different medium, some comparisons for details such as the swathes of drapery issuing from Christ's throne and over his left arm; the drapery diagonally crossing St Peter's knee, with stylised patterning of folds below; the ruched effect of the Virgin's robe; the relatively large heads and short lower legs of the main figures. These figural proportions recall even earlier tenth-century works. The confronted and three-quarter length flying angels with upturned legs and

but magnification hints at fine detail such as the patterning of the mandorla, the cushion and the Virgin's sleeve. The heads of the main figures are carved almost in the round and the drilled eyes may have had jet or glass inlay, as in other Anglo-Saxon ivories. The saints are without haloes, but these could have been painted in or gilded. Three holes penetrate the thickness of the ivory, two from the lower edge and one larger one from the centre top, suggesting the panel was not, or was not always, regarded as an object complete in itself but was mounted. The small dimensions (c. 10.2 × c. 6.4 cm) and deep relief, the iconography and upper inscription identifying two saints would perhaps have made it a suitable component of a liturgical object other than a book cover.

The distinctiveness of the iconography may best be highlighted by comparison with the ivory Gunhild Cross now in the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen, which shares part of the Cambridge ivory's inscription and central image of the enthroned and wounded Christ (Figure 1.3). It will be suggested here that their shared inscribed text does not provide a literal description or simple caption of the accompanying image, but a highly compressed exposition. The survival of these examples of the same combination of text and image offers an unusual opportunity for showing the importance of differences in context; the additional texts and other features of the iconography on each work give a distinctive nuance to the very text and image they share: they do not say quite the same thing.

Unlike the Cambridge panel, the Gunhild Cross bears its own dating evidence in a dedicatory inscription to *Helena magni Svenonis regis filia*, who has habitually been identified with the daughter of Svein Estridsson (d. 1074/5). The cross has been regarded as eleventh-century English work imported into Denmark. This has presented a problem however, because stylistic and iconographic details have suggested to numerous scholars comparisons with twelfth-century English art and with continental work; a solution has been sought in the likelihood that the Scandinavian craftsmen of the Gunhild Cross drew on the same sources (including Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon art) as the English illuminator of the St Albans Psalter c. 1120–30.⁷ More recently, H. Langberg has challenged the customary eleventh-century interpretation of the dedicatory [75] inscription and related it instead to the daughter of Svein Grathe (d. 1157), and his detailed examination of the cross's style and technique would seem to support his claim

horizontal folds across the waist, and the iconography of Christ enthroned on a rainbow arc with the raised hand touching or penetrating the mandorla, are among the most common motifs in late Anglo-Saxon art, though typically Christ's pose shows the knees flung outwards far more than on the ivory.

⁷ For example, the prominence of profile heads with lentoid eyes, as in the St Albans Psalter and sculpture at Kilpeck, and the caricatured portrayal of devils characteristic of English art, in the Winchester Psalter c. 1150 and even in the pre-Conquest Tiberius Psalter. O. Pächt, C.R. Dodwell, F. Wormald (ed), *The St Albans Psalter* (London 1960) 173; P. Lasko, *Ars sacra 800–1200* (Harmondsworth 1972) 168; D. Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires du moyen âge* (Fribourg 1978) 113.



Figure 1.3 Gunhild ivory cross. CC-BY-SA, Lennart Larsen, Nationalmuseet Danmark.

for a Danish or North German origin in the third quarter of the twelfth century.⁸ Langberg was not primarily concerned with the cross's other inscriptions and iconography or with earlier theories of English influence; while emphasising the court art of Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony, as an important component in the cross's background, he did not explore the possible relevance of the English contacts of this court or the considerable cultural contacts between Anglo-Saxon England and Ottonian Germany.⁹

8 H. Langberg, *Gunhildkorset: Gunhild's cross and medieval court art in Denmark* (Copenhagen 1982) 59, 68–69, 73–78.

9 Henry the Lion married Mathilda, daughter of Henry II of England. For English influence on the 'Gmunden Gospels' of Henry the Lion see O. Pächt et al., *The St Albans Psalter*, 63; for the depiction of seven named Anglo-Saxon kings on the Oswald reliquary at Hildesheim, see P. Lasko, *Ars sacra*, 207. For earlier contacts see D. Bullough, 'The continental background of the reform', D. Parsons (ed), *Tenth century studies* (London 1975) 33–35; R. Deshman, 'Christus rex et magi reges: kingship and christology in Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon art', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 10 (1976) 396–97.

I. Last Judgement

The face of the Gunhild Cross once bore the figure of Christ crucified. Its four terminal roundels show labelled personifications of *Vita* and *Mors*, *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*. In an inscribed medallion within a quatrefoil at the centre of the reverse side of the cross (Figure 1.4), Christ is shown enthroned and exhibiting his five wounds, his torso bared and his hands raised *in forma crucis*. It is comparable not only in iconography but in format with the Bernward paten c. 1180 from the Guelph treasury, produced in one of the eclectic workshops patronised by Henry the Lion.¹⁰ The paten's central engraving shows the wounded enthroned Christ, similarly enthroned on an arc with hands extended, and similarly surrounded by an inscribed medallion (not a mandorla) which is in turn contained within an octofoil. The medallion is inscribed: *Hvc. spectate. viri sic. vosmoriendo, redemi* and the outer rim of the paten bears the words: *Est. corpus. in. se. panis. qui. frang. in. me. vivet. ineternum. qui. digne. sumit. eum*. By its association with these words and the function of the object it decorates, the image of the wounded enthroned Christ is here given a redemptive and eucharistic interpretation. The similar image of the Gunhild Cross, however, is transformed by its different context.

Words from the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:24–25) are inscribed along the shaft of the cross, above and below the wounded figure of Christ (Figure 1.3). Part of the text is written on a scroll held by Dives in Hell, shown in a roundel at the foot of the cross. His supplication, *Pater Habraham misere me . . .* is answered in the rest of the gospel text inscribed on a scroll descending from the roundel at the top of the cross, showing Lazarus in Abraham's bosom.¹¹ Angels to the right and left of the wounded Christ in the central quatrefoil also hold scrolls which extend along the arms of the cross, each to a roundel. The inscriptions from Matthew 25:34 and 41, *Venite benedicti patris mei* and *Dicidite a me maledicti i(n) ignem*, extend from Christ's right and left side respectively to the two lateral roundel scenes of the Blessed and the Damned. The cross itself, the apocalyptic 'sign of the Son of Man' (Matthew 24:30) therefore literally bears or speaks Christ's words of judgement. The Gunhild Cross alludes both to the immediate judgement on the death of an individual (implied in the Lucan parable of Dives and Lazarus) and to the general Last Judgement at the end of time [76] indicated here by the apocalyptic figure of Christ with the book of life, inscribed with the *alpha* and *omega*, separating the blessed and the damned. The connection between particular and general judgement is also evident in twelfth-century monumental works which do not directly quote the Matthean texts but do juxtapose the Dives and Lazarus story with the Last Judgement.

¹⁰ *Ars sacra*, 208, pl 230.

¹¹ In the Manerius Bible, whose illuminator was English, the parable also appears both with the detail of the devils and with a scroll extended between Dives and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, inscribed *Pater Abraham misere me*. Paris, Bibl. St Genevieve, 10, fol. 128v; W. Cahn, *Romanesque Bible illumination* (Cornell 1982) 222, fig 186.



Figure 1.4 Gunhild ivory cross (detail). CC-BY-SA, Lennart Larsen, Nationalmuseet Danmark.

The Gunhild Cross presents, in an iconographically arresting way, a specific textual association which had long been an exegetical and homiletic topos particularly popular in Insular works. Dives's neglect of Lazarus and his subsequent punishment was interpreted as an example of those who will be damned at the Last Judgement for having failed to recognise Christ in the needy: *Discedite a me maledicti in ignem aeternum [. . .] quia esurivi, et non dedistis mihi manducare*. St Augustine quoted the Matthew 25:34, forty-one texts in his sermon on Dives and Lazarus, and Caesarius of Arles, who was also an important influence on later Anglo-Saxon homiletic literature, makes the same link several times.¹² The

12 Augustine, Sermon 24, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos 10, 433. D.G. Morin (ed), *Caesarius of Arles, Sermones i*, CCL 103 (1953) nos 27, 31. One or both Matthean texts are quoted in sermons 26, 28, 29, 43, 51, 58, 60.

Alphabetic Hymn quoted by Bede in *De arte metrica* closely follows Matthew 25 and the link with the Lazarus story is implied in Christ's condemnation of the damned.¹³ The Matthean texts also feature in Julian of Toledo's seventh-century compendium of patristic eschatological texts, *Prognosticon futuri saeculi*. The popularity of this work before the twelfth century, the Insular associations of its MSS and its availability to English monastic reform circles are well known.¹⁴ Ælfric's excerpts from it cite the Dives and Lazarus story and quote the Matthean texts; the same link is indirectly made in his homily for the second Sunday after Pentecost.¹⁵ The Matthean texts also appear in Ælfric's sermons on the nativity of St Paul and the first Sunday in Lent, in the Exeter Book poem *Christ III*, in three Rogationtide and several twelfth-century anonymous Old English homilies and among the prayers at the end of the Bury Psalter.¹⁶ With the possible exception of an ivory plaque, often cited as ninth-century Insular work and the earliest full representation of the Last Judgement in western art, no English pictorial representation of the texts survives from before the twelfth century.¹⁷

On the continent, the Matthean texts made an early appearance in the representation of the Last Judgement in the Bamberg Apocalypse c. 1000.¹⁸ Christ is shown fully robed, enthroned between two tiers of angels and the apostles above the tombs of the resurrected at the last trump. The characteristic feature of this iconographic type is the huge cross Christ holds and, immediately below his feet, two standing angels who hold scrolls inscribed with Matthew 25:34, 41 and effectively separate the groups of the blessed and the damned to Christ's right and left. The distinguishing feature of the iconographic type of the Last Judgement dominant through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is the exposition of Christ's wounds at Doomsday. An early sub-group, represented by the frescoes at Burgfelden c. 1075–1100, combines the display of the large cross with the display of

13 MGH Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini 4.2 (1914) 507–10. Matthew 25:34 is also quoted in the collect *De iudicio futuro* in the Book of Nunnaminster, fol. 32v. H. de Gray Birch (ed), *An ancient MS of the eighth or ninth century formerly belonging . . . to Nunnaminster* (London 1889) 80–81.

14 J.N. Hillgarth, 'Julian of Toledo in the middle ages', and 'Julian of Toledo in the *Liber floridus*', *J Warburg Courtauld Inst* 21 (1958) 22–23; 26 (1963) 192–93.

15 Text of Ælfric's excerpts in M. McC. Gatch, *Preaching and theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto 1977) 134–46; see 96–101. B. Thorpe (ed), *The homilies of Ælfric* i (London 1844) 335–37.

16 Thorpe, *Homilies of Ælfric*, i 397; ii (London 1846) 109; A.S. Cook (ed), *The Christ of Cynewulf* (Boston 1900) 50, 57; J. Bazire and J.E. Cross (ed), *Eleven Rogationtide homilies* (Toronto 1982) no 3, 5, 11; R. Morris (ed), *Old English homilies of the twelfth century* EETS OS 53, no 1, 12, 28; A. Wilmart, 'The prayers of the Bury Psalter', *Downside Rev* 43 (1930) 208.

17 Victoria and Albert Museum, 253–1867. B. Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christliche Kunst des ersten Jahrtausends*, Wiener Byzantinische Studien 3 (Vienna 1966) 118–20, pl 35; J. Beckwith, *Ivory carvings in early medieval England* cat. 4; C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon art*, 88, pl 17.

18 B. Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung*, pl 45.

the five wounds.¹⁹ Far more usually, the wounded Judge was accompanied not only by the cross but by the other instruments of the passion, for example on an embossed copper gilt Mosan lectionary cover c. 1160, where Christ's mandorla is inscribed with Matthew 25:34, 41: both hands are raised and the *alpha* and *omega* [77] signs are shown as on the Gunhild Cross.²⁰ On the west wall fresco at San Angelo in Formis c. 1130, which also includes the Matthean texts and the instruments of the passion, the wounded Judge receives the blessed with his right palm shown outwards and rejects the damned with the back of his left hand.²¹ At Conques, for the first time in the sequence of great Last Judgement sculpted tympana, Christ's right hand is raised in acceptance, his left lowered in rejection; the Matthean texts again appear on scrolls held by angels flanking the wounded Judge's mandorla.²²

Not all Last Judgement scenes included the inscriptions but the foregoing brief survey has indicated that in a wide range of iconographic types and media and over a wide geographic area, the Last Judgement provided the standard context for the appearance of the Matthean texts. In several examples the texts appear with motifs rare or unique in Last Judgement iconography, as in the Gunhild Cross's display of the open book on the lap of the wounded Judge and its pictorial and textual association of Matthew 25:34, 41 and the Dives and Lazarus parable with a third text, which is inscribed around the medallion enclosing Christ like a mandorla: *Videte (m)anus meas et pedes meos dic(it) d(omi)n(u)s*.

The late Anglo-Saxon ivory panel in Cambridge which bears an abbreviated form of the same text (Luke 24:39), similarly enclosing an image of Christ enthroned on an arc and displaying his wounds, is also customarily described as a Last Judgement (Figure 1.1). The iconographic and textual features which unambiguously identify the Gunhild Cross scene as part of a Last Judgement are missing, however, from the Cambridge ivory which has other details not paralleled on the Gunhild Cross. The Cambridge ivory shows Christ enthroned with both hands held up, palms outwards, against the rim of a vesica-shaped mandorla. His upper right side is bared. The side wound and the nail print in the left hand are clear and presumably all four nail prints were originally shown, but the right hand and the feet are now extremely worn. He is flanked by two standing figures identified by inscriptions: on his right is the Virgin Mary, crowned, on his left is St Peter.

19 O. Demus and M. Hirmer, *Romanesque mural painting* (New York 1970) pl 241, which also shows a similar scene from St Georg, Reichenau, though the wounded hands are lowered and the side wound is not exposed.

20 F. Steenbock, *Der kirchliche Prachteinband im fruhen Mittelalter* (Berlin 1965) cat. 101, pl 140.

21 B. Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung*, pl 50.

22 H. Bober (ed), *Emile Mâle, religious art in France: the twelfth century* (Princeton 1978) fig 288. For other examples of sculptured tympana showing Christ displaying his wounded side at the Last Judgement see fig 152, 153, 287 (St Denis, Beaulieu, Laon) and W. Sauerländer, *Gothic sculpture in France 1140–1270* pl 107–108, 145 (Chartres and N. Dame, Paris); E. Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (Rome 1968–76), iv col 519.

Beneath Christ's feet two hovering angels support a long-shafted cross which is flanked by two groups of four small figures. The inscribed mandorla includes the abbreviated text *Vi(det)e manus et p(edes)*. The individual components of the composition may be examined in turn.

The presence of the Virgin and St Peter has been interpreted as a kind of Deesis, supporting the view that the ivory depicts the Last Judgement.²³ However, in the Byzantine iconography of the Deesis and twelfth-century western works influenced by it, the Virgin and John the Baptist, not Peter, flank Christ,²⁴ while the usual intercessors in western monumental Last Judgements, from the Autun tympanum onwards, were the Virgin and John the Evangelist, most usually shown seated or kneeling.²⁵ The Last Judgement does not form the context for any of the several other late Anglo-Saxon works which particularly distinguish the Virgin and St Peter in scenes showing Christ on high in a mandorla of glory. The two saints are shown, for example, in two Winchester manuscripts which have striking correspondences with the Cambridge ivory. On the frontispiece [78] of the New Minster charter c. 966, king Edgar, the patron of the Benedictine reform at Winchester, presents the charter of his foundation to Christ, who is enthroned above on an arc within a vesica-shaped mandorla and accompanied by angels (Figure 1.5).²⁶ The royal benefaction is witnessed by the two saints to whom the New Minster was jointly dedicated, the Virgin and St Peter, shown to Christ's right and left, though in the lower register. As on the Cambridge ivory, St Peter is tonsured and holds his key and a book.

The ivory's compositional and iconographic parallels with fol. 6 of the New Minster *Liber Vitae* c. 1031 (Figure 1.6), are even closer, notwithstanding the manuscript drawing's additional inclusion of king Cnut, one hand on his sword, presenting a gift at the altar as he is symbolically crowned by an angel.²⁷ This propagandist tableau presents the Danish king and his consort, their names inscribed, as worthy continuators of the role of the Old English monarchy in protecting and patronising the church in general and Winchester and its saints in particular. Christ is again shown enthroned on an arc within a mandorla, but directly flanked, as on

23 J. Beckwith, *Ivory carvings*, 121; E. Kantorowicz, 'Ivories and litanies', *J Warburg Courtauld Inst* 5 (1942) 78, pl 20c.

24 Tenth-century Byzantine ivory of the Deesis mounted on the cover of bishop Bernward's Gospels (Hildesheim Cath. Treasury) c. 1000/10 in P. Lasko, *Ars sacra*, pl 122; twelfth-century western example of Deesis combined with Christ displaying his five wounds at the Last Judgement in A. Straub and G. Keller, *Herrade de Landsberg, Hortus Deliciarum* (Strasbourg 1879–99) pl 69–70. See A. Boeckler, *Die Regensburg-Prüfener Buchmalerei des XII. und XIII. Jahrhunderts* (Munich 1924) 47 for the opinion that the Deesis only entered western art from Byzantine art during the twelfth century.

25 D. Denny, 'The Last Judgement tympanum at Autun: its sources and meaning', *Speculum* 57 (1982) 532. The Virgin stands, interceding, at Christ's right hand in the Last Judgement wall painting at Reichenau, St Georg, and at Conques, the Virgin and St Peter stand on Christ's right.

26 London, British Library, MS Cotton, Vespasian A. VIII, fol. 2v, E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon manuscripts 900–1066* (London 1976) cat. 16, pl 84. E. John, *Orbis Britanniae* (Leicester 1966) 271–75 reasserts the traditional date of c. 966 for the charter.

27 London, British Library, Stowe 944, fol. 6. E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon manuscripts*, cat. 78, pl 244.



Figure 1.5 New Minster foundation charter. © The British Library Board. MS Cotton Vespasian A.VIII, fol. 2v.

the Cambridge ivory, by St Peter on his left, and the Virgin on his right. Both manuscript and ivory depict Peter tonsured and beardless, as was customary in Anglo-Saxon art, and in both he holds the key of the kingdom against his left shoulder. In both works the Virgin is shown, unusually, holding a book.²⁸ Furthermore, both the ivory and the drawing depict the beardless Christ with three rays of glory instead of the usual circular halo.²⁹ In both works there is a large cross directly

28 On the ivory, the Virgin's crown, worn over a long veil, is unusual but also appears in a manuscript related to the *Liber Vitae*, the New Minster prayers and offices, London, British Library, Cotton, Titus D. XXVII, fol. 75v, E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon manuscripts*, pl 245. The Virgin is shown about to receive a crown from the hand of God in the scenes of her Dormition in the Benedictional of St Æthelwold (London, British Library, MS Add. 49598, fol. 102v, c. 971–84) and of archbishop Robert (Rouen, Bibl. mun., MS Y 7 (369), fol. 54v, c. 980), both Winchester MSS. Titus D XXVII, fol. 75v (like the iconographically related drawing in the Arenburg Gospels, fol. 13v), also provides another Anglo-Saxon example of the Virgin holding a book and standing at the right hand of Christ enthroned.

29 This detail occurs in Canterbury MSS, including London, British Library, Harley 603, fol. 51, even though the corresponding scene in the Utrecht Psalter (of which Harley 603, of c. 1000–1020, is



Figure 1.6 New Minster Register (*Liber Vitae*). © The British Library Board. MS Stowe, fol. 6.

beneath Christ's feet, attended by two half-length and hovering angels, though in the *Liber Vitae* the cross is of precious metalwork with moulded terminals, and is placed on the altar by its royal donor. Despite these many correspondences of detail, it seems improbable that the Cambridge ivory's hieratic, ritualistic composition would have been derived from the *Liber Vitae*'s occasional picture.

In the two New Minster miniatures, Edgar and Cnut each receives the blessing of Christ, shown in eternal glory; doubtless they were not unmindful of the Last Judgement in making their gifts, and the frontispiece of the *Liber Vitae* is immediately followed on fol. 6v–7r with sobering scenes of the contrasted fates of the blessed and the damned, but the royal donor pictures do not themselves

generally a close copy) has the conventional halo, D. Tselos, *The sources of the Utrecht Psalter miniatures* (Minneapolis 1955) fig. 51. It also occurs in the Bamberg Apocalypse, fol. 53r which, like the Canterbury examples, includes features of early origin. The three-rayed glory appears in Early Christian art, e.g. a sixth-century onyx of SS Peter and Paul flanking the cross with a bust of Christ above, K. Weitzmann, *The age of spirituality: late antique and Early Christian art* (New York 1979) cat. 525.

depict that future Judgement. The Virgin and St Peter occupy a similar position in a scene of heavenly patrons and royal donors on the gold margins of the cover of the Codex Aureus from Echternach, c. 983–91.³⁰ At the top on the viewer's left stands the Virgin holding a book in her left hand, her right hand raised in acclamation, as on the Cambridge ivory. The complementary figure of St Peter on the right holds the keys. The two were the patrons of Echternach; below them are four other saints associated with the monastery's foundation and life, and the two donors, the empress Theophanu and her son Otto III. The book cover's centrepiece was replaced with an ivory of the crucifixion c. 1053–56, but the tenth-century gold margins embossed with the figures of patrons and donors, together with the beasts of the evangelists and the four rivers of Paradise, could originally have accompanied a central scene of Christ enthroned in majesty. The [79] miniature of the Ascension within the Codex Aureus also distinguishes the Virgin and St Peter among the disciples. Similarly, in addition to the royal donor scenes in the Winchester foundation charter and *Liber Vitae*, the other context in late Anglo-Saxon art where the Virgin and St Peter were together given particular importance in scenes showing Christ in a mandorla of glory, was in the iconography of the Ascension. Both in the traditional western type of Christ standing or striding within a mandorla, and in the late Insular innovative type now known as the 'disappearing Christ', where only the lower tip of Christ's mandorla and his ascending feet are still visible to the disciples' astonished gaze, the Virgin and St Peter together occupy the central place among the disciples as the chief witnesses of the event and representatives of Christ's body, the church.³¹ In the New Minster foundation charter of c. 966 the Virgin and St Peter alone remain of this groundline group; king Edgar has been likened to a disciple in the eastern iconography of the Ascension, eagerly looking up at Christ enthroned among angels above (Figure 1.5).³² In some Middle Byzantine versions of the Ascension, reflected in the Æthelstan Psalter fol. 120v, the 'two men in white' of the Ascension narrative in Acts 1:11 are shown as two half-length angels who vigorously point upwards to direct the gaze of the disciples below to the vision of the ascended and glorified Christ enthroned above, just as in the *Liber Vitae*, two angels similarly interposed between the earthly and heavenly regions point upwards to direct the gaze of the king and the small figures below him (Figure 1.6).

It would seem, therefore, that the presence of the Virgin and St Peter on the Cambridge ivory, unusually prominently identified by inscription as well as attributes, and shown standing nearly frontally in attitudes of acclamation, need not

30 Nuremberg, Germanisches National-Museum; P. Lasko, *Ars sacra* 98, pl 92.

31 The Benedictional of St Æthelwold, fol. 64v, the Evangelistary of St Bertin, fol. 85, Missal of Robert of Jumieges, fol. 81v, Bury Psalter, fol. 73v illustrated in M. Schapiro, 'The image of the disappearing Christ', *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 23 (1943) fig 2, 8, 4, 3.

32 K. Mildener, 'The unity of Cynewulf's *Christ* in the light of iconography', *Speculum* 23 (1948) 431.



Figure 1.7 (*Æthelstan Psalter*). © The British Library Board. MS Cotton Galba A XVIII, fol. 2v.

necessarily be read as a *Deesis*, or as evidence that the ivory simply shows the Last Judgement. Nor is there reason to suppose that the small figures at the bottom of the ivory are apostles, as has been suggested.³³ They are only eight in number and are not shown as part of the heavenly company ranged in rows either side of Christ or with the thrones and books that might identify them as assessors at the Last Judgement. Rather, they recall the veneration of the cross represented in Early Christian art by scenes of apostles, saints or men flanking and turning towards the exalted cross, a theme which survives in later Anglo-Saxon sculpted slabs at Addingham and Lindisfarne. On the Cambridge ivory the attendant figures are now sadly mutilated and headless but it is clear that they are fully clothed, not newly emerged from the tomb at the general resurrection, and there is nothing in their

33 J. Beckwith, *Ivory carvings*, 38, 121. For the importance of the number eight, however, as a symbol of baptism and the resurrection, see P. Underwood, 'The Fountain of Life in MSS of the gospels', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950) 81–82. See R. Bailey, *Viking age sculpture in northern England* (London 1980) 162–70 where the Addingham and Lindisfarne scenes of the veneration of the cross are interpreted in the context of Doomsday.

disposition to suggest they represent the division of the blessed and the damned at the moment of the Last Judgement. The outer figures are turning inwards towards the cross. They are not shown as lay figures but wear long robes. The frontispiece of the New Minster *Liber Vitae* (Figure 1.6) again offers a broad analogue for the composition. The monastic community is there depicted by a few tiny robed figures below, some tonsured, some cowed, looking up at the royal donation of the altar cross and, beyond, at what that *crux gemmata* symbolises – the glorified Christ, enthroned and attended by his saints, their local patrons, the Virgin and St Peter. In the manuscript illustration the [80] cross, attended by angels, literally connects an earthly scene below with the heavenly scene of Christ in glory. The cross may have a similar function of connecting the temporal and the eternal in the composition of the Cambridge ivory.

In Early Christian art two flying angels holding a cross in a clypeus, or two standing angels attending a cross, denoted the exaltation of the glorified body of Christ, a theme appropriate to the eucharistic context in which the image was shown on liturgical bookcovers, altar vessels and sanctuary decoration. Two are of particular relevance to the composition on the Cambridge ivory. A sixth-century ivory now in Paris is similarly divided into registers. Above, the beardless enthroned Christ is flanked by two standing saints and below, on a smaller scale, is a triumphal cross adored by two angels with veiled hands. One of the Holy Land pilgrims' ampullae from the collection at the Irish foundation of Bobbio shows Christ enthroned in glory in a mandorla attended by two flying angels, set above the exalted cross which is attended by two standing angels.³⁴ From the Carolingian Gellone Sacramentary onwards, two angels were often shown over the arms of the cross in western representations of the crucifixion which emphasised its sacramental significance, and they were a standard component in the early Insular iconography of the crucifixion. Late Anglo-Saxon examples appear in various media and contexts, including the Arenberg Gospels fol. 9v and the Sherborne Pontifical fol. 4v;³⁵ it occurs in several ivories, on the Cleveland box-wood casket and the Romsey rood panel.³⁶ A variant is engraved on the silver frame of the portable altar in the Musée de Cluny, and the pair of sculpted angels over the chancel arch at Bradford on Avon may be the remnant of a monumental version.³⁷ Early medieval representations of angels holding the cross in a clypeus or flanking the cross (rather than the crucifixion) are much rarer, though do survive in a variety

34 W.F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Mainz 1976) no 132, pl 40. A. Grabar, *Les ampoules de Terre Sainte* (Paris 1958) no 2, pl 33. This composition is broadly reproduced on the early twelfth-century bronze doors of San Zeno, Verona (P. Lasko, *Ars sacra*, pl 235), with the addition of two details also appearing on the Cambridge ivory: the exposition of Christ's side wound and the three-rayed glory. The latter detail also occurs in Early Christian examples of the exaltation of the cross. See note 29.

35 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 869, fol. 9v; Paris, BN, lat. 943, fol. 4v, E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, pl 171, 134.

36 J. Beckwith, *Ivory-carvings* pl. 38, 69, 72; D. Talbot Rice, *English art 871–1100* pl. 36a, 38b, 18b.

37 J. Backhouse et al. (ed), *The golden age of Anglo-Saxon art*, cat. 76, 135.

of contexts in Carolingian art: the ivory cover of the Lorsch Gospels, the golden altar of San Ambrogio in Milan,³⁸ figura IV of Hrabanus Maurus's treatise *De laudibus sanctae crucis*, the Reginaldus Sacramentary fol. 2r and the Vivian Bible canon tables fol. 327r.³⁹ The Cambridge ivory is the only extant Anglo-Saxon example of angels attending the cross, though the Hrabanus Maurus diagram survives in early tenth- and mid-eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon copies.⁴⁰ The image's allusion to the exalted body of Christ is clearly preserved in a sacramentary from Mont St Michel c. 1050–65.⁴¹ The interwoven cross at the centre of the *Vere Dignum* monogram at the preface to the mass, traditionally alluding to Christ's inseparable human and divine natures, is here attended by two angels. The image of the angels and the cross had considerable popularity during the twelfth century when it was used in western reliquaries of the True Cross, sometimes combined with a representation of the wounded and glorified Christ.

The image of the cross attended or supported by angels thus had a long if sporadic history before the twelfth century in contexts quite independent of the Last Judgement. During the twelfth century, however, it was often combined with the motif of the exposition of Christ's wounds in works which undeniably represent the Last Judgement. The distinctiveness of the Cambridge ivory's [81] earlier combination of the two motifs may be more clearly established by comparison with twelfth-century English examples. In the Winchester Bible, vol. i, fol. 5, two angels raise a hewn timber cross before the figure of Christ, shown with bared side and uplifted wounded hands.⁴² The scene is set in the seventh and culminating roundel of a series arranged within the initial letter of the book of Genesis to depict the six ages of the world prefigured by the six days of Creation; in this context, the cross heralds Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. In one of the Gospel leaves in Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 120, c. 1130–40, the huge cross attended by two genuflecting angels also rises up in front of Christ as 'the sign of the Son of Man' signalling his triumphant return at the Last Day.⁴³ Its role as one of the instruments of the Passion exhibited at the Last Judgement is emphasised by the four nails prominently mounted on its horizontal beam, and the lance and crown of thorns displayed

38 A. Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen* i (Berlin 1914) pl 7; H. Hubert, J. Porcher, W. F. Wolbach, *Carolingian art* (London 1970) pl 223–24. It is possible that the Section of the Lorsch book cover showing the angels and the cross is of Early Christian date.

39 Vienna, Nationalbibl. God. 652; Amiens, Bibl. mun. mss. 223. Reginaldus Sac., fol. 2r, Autun, Bibl. de la Ville and Vivian Bible, Paris, BN, lat. 1, fol. 327r in W. Koehler, *Die karolingischen Miniaturen* i (Berlin 1930) 61b, 83.

40 Cambridge, Trinity College Library, B. 16.3, fol. 6v; Cambridge, University Library, Gg. 5.35, fol. 213r.

41 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 641, fol. 61v, J.J.G. Alexander, *Norman illumination at Mont-St Michel 966–1100* (Oxford 1970) pl 36.

42 W. Oakeshott, *The two Winchester bibles* (Oxford 1981) pl III.

43 C.M. Kauffmann, *Romanesque manuscripts 1066–1190*, cat. 35, pl 102; E. Parker, 'A twelfth century cycle of New Testament drawings from Bury St Edmunds Abbey', *Proc Suffolk Inst Archaeol* 31 (1969) 272–74, pl 43.

beside it by two standing angels. The twelve apostles holding books are enthroned in tiers as assessors and below, sharply contrasted groups of the blessed and the damned are led respectively to the gates of paradise on Christ's right and hellmouth on his left. In addition to such differences in context, the central image itself differs from that on the Cambridge ivory. Christ is a bearded figure with bare torso, sitting on a throne. His wounded hands are lowered, not raised in a priestly gesture of *Pax vobiscum*; the right hand is turned outwards in acceptance of the blessed, while the left is turned down in rejection of the damned (as in some representations of the Last Judgement which include the texts from Matthew 25:34, 41).

The Pembroke College Gospel leaves and the Winchester Psalter (London, British Library, Cotton Nero IV), c. 1150, have numerous correspondences in their cycles of the Passion and Resurrection, but the Winchester Psalter also recalls many iconographic features of late Anglo-Saxon Winchester manuscripts. Though later than the Pembroke leaf of the Last Judgement, the Winchester Psalter has a miniature iconographically closer to the Cambridge ivory. Folio 35, like the ivory, is formally divided into two registers (Figure 1.8). Christ is similarly seated on a bowed arc, rather than a throne. Both hands are raised, palms outwards, to shoulder height and his right side is bared. He is flanked by angels rather than by the Virgin and St Peter, though they are given marked distinction elsewhere in the Winchester Psalter. The cross is displayed beneath Christ's feet, entirely in the lower register. It is a *crux gemmata*, an outsize altar cross with moulded terminals, elevated by two standing angels before a draped altar, thereby suggesting its allusion to the *exaltatio crucis* motif and the glorified body of Christ, rather than its role as an instrument of the Passion. The twelfth century seal of Holy Cross Abbey, Waltham, also depicts a large cross held with both hands by each of two confronted standing angels in a design which does not form part of a Last Judgement and is clearly derived from the Early Christian motif of the veneration of the Cross.⁴⁴ The moulded terminals of the elevated cross in the Winchester Psalter recall the metalwork altar cross, attended by flying angels, at the foot of the enthroned Christ in the New Minster *Liber vitae*, fol. 6 (Figure 1.6) and also the form of the cross in the crucifixion scenes in the Sherborne Pontifical and [82] Arenberg Gospels where the presence of attendant flying angels and the chalice stress the sacramental interpretation of the *ara crucis*. Whoever added the Anglo-Norman French captions to the Winchester Psalter saw this scene on fol. 35 as depicting the Lord in majesty and the mystery of the wound in his side, with the angels displaying the cross of the Saviour.⁴⁵ Only by its incorporation in an extensive programme with scenes of the dead at the last trump (f 31), the twelve apostles as assessors (f 32, 34), angels holding instruments of the Passion (f 3),

44 London, Public Record Office, E42/97. Pre-1201, reproducing the pre-1138 design of the first seal of the refounded abbey, G. Zarnecki, J. Holt, T. Holland (ed), *English Romanesque art 1066–1200* (London 1984) cat. 361.

45 F. Wormald, *The Winchester Psalter* (London 1973) 28, pl 38, 57.

the blessed and damned (f 34, 37) and the torture of the damned and Hellmouth (f 38, 39), can fol. 35 be read as the Last Judgement.

This survey has shown that in their representation of Christ enthroned on an arc within a mandorla, four English works of Winchester origin or probable connection, executed over a long period and not stylistically derived from each other, have thematic cross-references peculiar to this group. Three of them the New Minster foundation charter, the Cambridge ivory and the *Liber Vitae* frontispiece include the figures of the Virgin and St Peter. Three of them – the Cambridge ivory, the *Liber Vitae* and the Winchester Psalter – show Christ enthroned above a cross attended by angels (in two cases with an altar, in two cases with Christ displaying his wounds). Such major themes may well have been perpetuated through wall-paintings or carved stone panels. The surviving fragmentary painted example over the chancel arch at Nether Wallop has been closely compared with the style of the New Minster foundation charter and the Benedictional of St Æthelwold and depicts two angels at the top of a mandorla which could have enclosed a Christ in majesty, though it has been suggested that the themes of the ‘triumphalist Cross of glory and the Majesty might still have been interchangeable’ in this period and context.⁴⁶ A painting over the chancel arch at Clayton, Sussex c. 1125–50, shows Christ enthroned in a mandorla supported by two angels. As in the Cambridge ivory, his right shoulder and upper side is bare and both hands are raised, palm outwards, to display the wounds.⁴⁷

It has been seen that the surviving works most like the central image of the Cambridge ivory differ from it in having an unambiguous Last Judgement context. The Winchester Psalter (Figure 1.8) is closest in its general composition of the wounded Christ enthroned above the cross raised by angels, while the Gunhild Cross (Figure 1.4) is closest in combining the same Lucan text with the exposition of Christ’s wounds. Stylistically, these two twelfth-century works are unlike Anglo-Saxon art and unlike each other; neither can be claimed as a copy of the Cambridge ivory. By the mid-twelfth century, the image of the enthroned and wounded Christ was widely established and, like many works of the period, the Winchester Psalter and the Gunhild Cross each had a complex cultural background. It is, however, possible that their images of Christ include iconographic reminiscences of late Anglo-Saxon art, either directly or through twelfth century derivatives, and that the Cambridge ivory was not, as it now appears, a solitary experiment in the late Anglo-Saxon period. [83]

II. Enthronement

If, rather than reading the Cambridge ivory in the light of twelfth-century Last Judgement iconography, one instead looks at it in the light of earlier and contemporary

46 R. Gem and P. Tudor-Craig, ‘A “Winchester school” wall-painting at Nether-Wallop, Hampshire’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981) 115–36 at 131, pl II.

47 O. Demus and M. Hirmer, *Romanesque mural painting*, 122, pl 230, fig 38. The scene is flanked by standing apostles with the *Traditio legis* and giving of the keys to St Peter in the lower register; the north wall shows the souls of the righteous being received by Peter in the Heavenly Jerusalem.

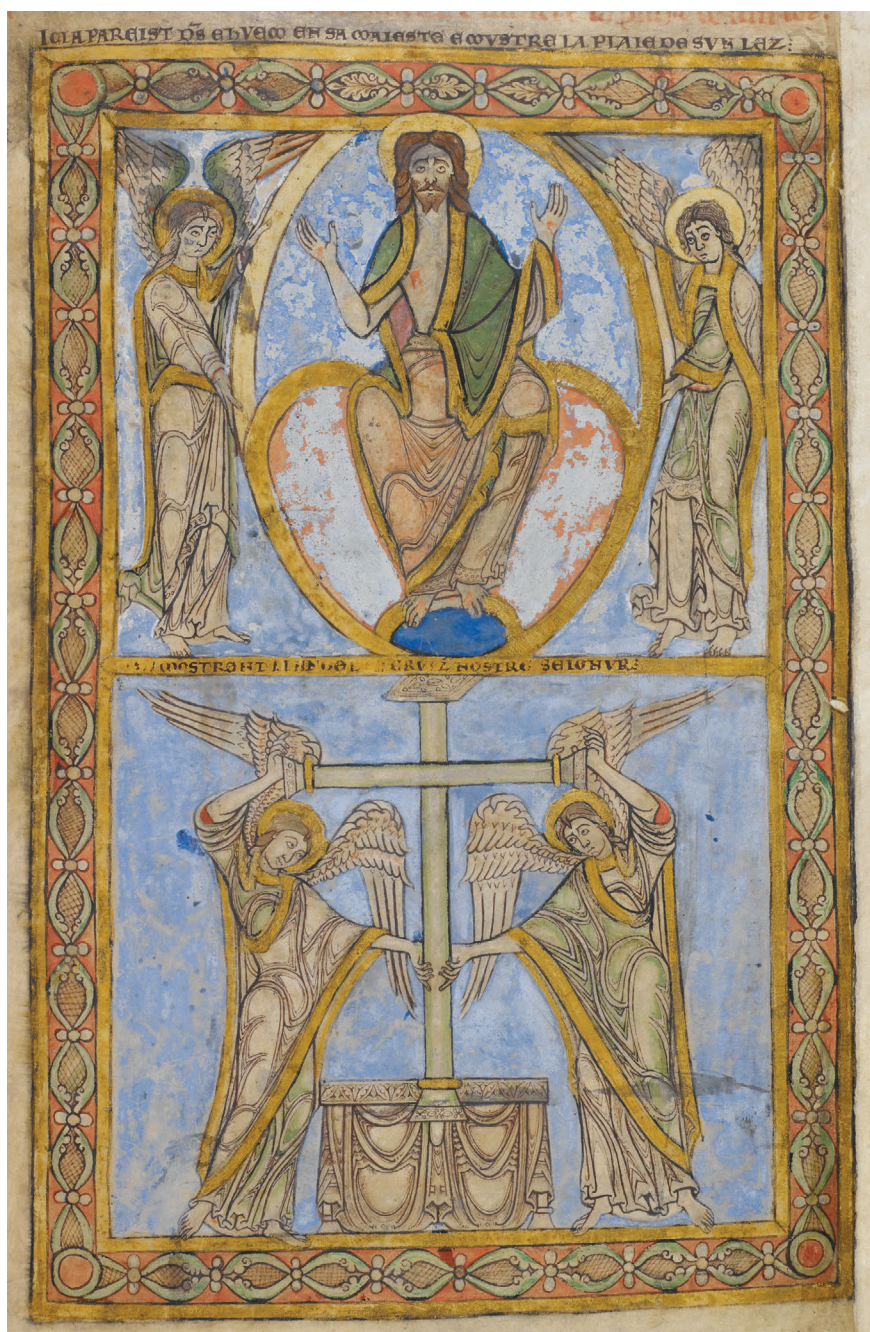


Figure 1.8 The Winchester Psalter. © The British Library Board. MS Cotton Nero C IV, fol. 35.

representations of Christ's wounds in other contexts, a rather different, though related, range of allusions emerges. One of the four surviving early tenth-century Anglo-Saxon miniatures inserted in the Æthelstan Psalter provides, on fol. 21r, the only extant precedent for the Cambridge ivory's image of Christ both enthroned and exposing his side wound (Figure 1.2). A complementary scene, placed at fol. 2v, shows Christ fully robed, enthroned and accompanied by the instruments of the Passion (Figure 1.7). In each, Christ's mandorla is surrounded by the ranks of the heavenly choirs inscribed with invocations from the litany. The appearance of the lance on fol. 2v and of the lance wound on fol. 21r have customarily been explained with reference to king Æthelstan's acquisition of the prestigious relic of the Holy Lance from Hugh, duke of the Franks, in 926.⁴⁸ This is an attractive theory, though challenged by the recent suggestion of an earlier date for the miniatures on the basis of the palaeography of the psalter's metrical calendar with which they seem associated, and by the renewed questioning of Æthelstan's connection with the psalter now bearing his name.⁴⁹ Furthermore, other features of the psalter's Anglo-Saxon miniatures indicate foreign influences and pre-Carolingian iconographic antecedents. Francis Wormald suggested the miniatures in the Æthelstan Psalter 'may be derived from earlier English illuminations themselves going back to early and exotic sources' and J.J.G. Alexander has argued that 'the originals may still have been accessible to the tenth-century artists'.⁵⁰ If so, it follows that the lance-wound shown on fol. 21r may be among such features whose origins pre-date 926. How then can the iconography of the wound be explained?

The often cited rarity of the instruments of the Passion in art before their great popularity in the late middle ages obscures their earlier importance. The lance and sponge flank Christ's throne in a monumental mosaic once over the chancel arch of S. Michele in Affricisco in imperial Ravenna, and they appear, displayed against the cross, in the Bobbio collection of pilgrims' ampullae (objects which, either in silver or stamped in base metal, could have been made in considerable numbers).⁵¹ The relic of the lance originally displayed in Constantine's basilica in

48 London, British Library, Cotton, Galba A. XVIII, E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon mss. cat.* 5, pl 33, M. Wood, 'The making of Athelstan's empire', P. Wormald, D. Bullough, and R. Collins (ed), *Ideal and reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon society: studies presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford 1983) 266–68, pl 4, 5. K. Leyser, 'The tenth century in Byzantine-Western relationships', K. Leyser (ed), *Medieval Germany and its neighbours* (London 1982) 116, n 78–79.

49 S. Keynes, 'King Athelstan's books', M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (ed), *Learning and literature in Anglo-Saxon England: studies presented to Peter Clemoes* (Cambridge 1985) 193–36. L.H. Loomis, 'The holy relics of Charlemagne and king Athelstan – the lances of Longinus and St Maurice', *Speculum* 25 (1950) 440, notes that relics of the crown of thorns and one of the four nails were also given to Æthelstan in the 926 presentation; neither appears in the Æthelstan Psalter miniatures.

50 F. Wormald, 'The "Winchester school" before St Æthelwold', P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (ed), *England before the Conquest: studies in primary sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock* (Cambridge 1971) 308; R. Deshman, 'Anglo-Saxon art after Alfred', *Art Bull* 56 (1974) 176–83. J.J.G. Alexander, 'The Benedictinal of St Æthelwold and Anglo-Saxon illumination of the reform period', D. Parsons (ed), *Tenth century studies*, 171.

51 B. Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung*, pl 16; A. Grabar, *Les ampoules de Terre Sainte*, pl 39.

Jerusalem was described in Adomnán's and Bede's accounts of the Holy Places; the head of the lance and spear, without their shafts or bearers, are shown against Christ's body on the cross in the late eighth-century Insular Würzburg *Epistles of St Paul*.⁵² The hymns of Fortunatus, incorporated in the liturgy for Good Friday and the Exaltation of the Cross, graphically evoke the wounding of Christ and enumerate the instruments of the Passion.⁵³ The lance appears among the instruments of the passion depicted in the Utrecht Psalter c. 820, and in Carolingian representations of the Majestas Agni, some of which show the Lamb pierced by the lance.⁵⁴ The piercing of Christ's side was a standard feature of early Insular crucifixion iconography and frequently shown in Carolingian [84] representations. The sacramental interpretation of the opening of Christ's side on the cross was common in exegesis; it was reflected in the Easter liturgy of baptism and in the Carolingian iconography of Ecclesia receiving the blood from the wound in a chalice.⁵⁵ The Irish treatise on the mass in the Stowe Missal describes the particle of the host cut off by the priest as 'the figure of the wounding with the lance'.⁵⁶ Insular devotional texts include compassionate meditation on the sufferings of Christ, as in the prayer *De latere Domini* among the eighteen prayers on the passion included in the Book of Nunnaminster of the late eighth or early ninth century.⁵⁷ These exegetical, liturgical and devotional themes were imaginatively combined and restated in vernacular poetry in the *Dream of the rood* in which the wound in Christ's side is a focal image.⁵⁸ In short, the explanation of the iconography of the lance and of Christ's wounded side in the Æthelstan Psalter fol. 2v and 21r does not hang on proving the Psalter's connection with the diplomatic gift of the Holy Lance to Æthelstan in 926. The question to be asked is not why did the lance and side wound appear in early tenth century art, but why does the lance wound appear in the Æthelstan Psalter, as on the Cambridge ivory, on the enthroned Christ rather than the Crucified? And what might this image have suggested for a contemporary monastic audience?

52 D. Meehan (ed), *Adomnán's De locis sanctis* (Dublin 1958) 50. Würzburg, Universitätsbibl. M. p. th. fol. 69, fol. 7v; J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular manuscripts, 6th. to 9th. century* (London 1978) cat 55.

53 *Pange lingua* and *Vexilla regis*, MGH AA 4.1 (1881) 27–28, 34–35.

54 E. De Wald, *The illustrations of the Utrecht Psalter* (1933) fol. 12; F. van der Meer, *Maiestas Domini* (Vatican City 1938) 140–44; H. Kessler, *The illustrated bibles from Tours* (Princeton 1977) figs. 47, 64.

55 e.g., St Augustine's influential commentary on John 19:34, R. Willems (ed), *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, CCSL 36 (1954) 661. For Ecclesia in Carolingian crucifixion iconography: Drogo sacramentary, fol. 43v, c. 840; ivory panel mounted on Henry II's Book of Pericopes (Munich); Nicasius diptych (Tournai), G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art* ii (London 1972) pl 364, 365, 367.

56 G.F. Warner (ed), *The Stowe Missal* ii, Henry Bradshaw Soc 32 (1900) 41.

57 W. de Grey Birch, *An ancient manuscript of the eighth or ninth century* (Hampshire Record Soc 1889) 77; A. Wilmart, 'Prières médiévales pour l'adoration de la croix', *Ephemerides liturgicae* (1932) 22–29 for the Book of Cerne and the Pontifical of Poitiers.

58 É. Ó Carragáin, 'Vidi aquam: the liturgical background to *The dream of the rood* 20a', *Notes and Queries* 30 (1983) 8–14.

Of the four gospel accounts of the crucifixion, St John alone describes the piercing of Christ's side with a lance (John 19:34). The evangelist (and hence subsequent commentators) saw this as a fulfilment of Messianic prophecy *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt* (John 19:37), recalling Zechariah 12:10, *Et aspicient ad me, quem confixerunt*. What the Old Testament prophet had said in the person of God, the evangelist applies to Christ, so the piercing of Christ's side is, paradoxically, seen as a proof or manifestation of his divinity. Read as part of the total revelation of scripture, St John's quotation was itself seen to be a prophecy, consummated in the apocalyptic vision: *Ecce venit cum nubibus, et videbit eum omnis oculus, et qui pupugerunt. Et plangent se super eum omnes tribus terrae* (Revelation 1:7). These three texts constituted a familiar exegetical chain so that quotation of any one, or even part of any one of them could carry allusions to the remaining two; their potential range of allusion was greatly extended because the third link in the chain was itself part of a complex of texts on which patristic and early medieval eschatology was based. For example, the second half of Revelation 1:7 from the chain concerning the wound of Christ (*Et plangent super omnes tribus terrae*) closely accords with the phrase *et tunc plangent omnes tribus terrae* in St Matthew's account of the Last Things: 'And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' (Matthew 24:30). This in turn is compounded of Old Testament apocalyptic texts such as that from Zacharias. 12:10 already quoted and Daniel 7:13–14, *Aspiciet eum . . . et ecce cum nubibus caeli quasi Filius hominis veniebat . . . et omnes populi, tribus, et linguae ipsi servient*. The iconographic implications of such cross-referencing were far reaching. [85]

It is not immediately evident why the apocalyptic fulfilment of St John's prophecy 'They shall look on him whom they pierced' should necessarily be pictured in terms of a wounded and enthroned figure of Christ: there were other ways in which the identity of the crucified and glorified Christ could be represented. *Rex regum et Dominus dominantium* (Revelation 19:16) is inscribed on the garments of Christ at his Second Coming in the Benedictional of St Æthelwold, c. 971–84; *Justus Iudex* and *Rex Regum* appears on the garments of Christ enthroned as Judge in a mid-eleventh-century copy of Ælfric's *Homilies*.⁵⁹ In two late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, these apocalyptic titles are directly associated with the image of the Crucified. One, probably copied in the second quarter of the tenth century from a Carolingian exemplar of c. 840, and the other, from the mid-eleventh century, reproduce the recondite *carmina figurata* in *De laudibus sanctae crucis* by Hrabanus Maurus.⁶⁰ The diagrams include a striking image of Christ standing

59 London, British Library, MS Add. 49598, fol. 9v, F. Wormald, *The Benedictional of St Æthelwold* (London 1959) 20, pl 3. Cambridge, Trinity College Library, MS. B. 15.34 369), fol. 1, E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, cat. 74, pl 241 (That is MS.B.15.34 (369)).

60 Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 16.3, fol. 3, E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, cat. 14, pl 45; Cambridge, University Library, Gg. 5.35, fol. 211v.

stripped and with arms outstretched, as at the crucifixion. To the discerning eye, however, the hidden divinity of the Crucified is revealed not only in Christ's hieratic stance, but in the letters inscribed in his hair and halo which ingeniously spell out his true identity: *Iste rex iustitiae* and *Rex regum et Dominus dominorum*.

Other early examples use either the wounds or the throne in showing Christ's continuing identity. Two Byzantine gold pectoral crosses from the late sixth or seventh century show Christ standing on clouds at his Second Coming and clothed in a pallium, yet set within the framework of the cross and displaying the nailprints in his hands and feet.⁶¹ The sixth-century mosaic of S. Michele in Affricisco omits the wounds but shows Christ enthroned like an emperor at his Adventus, 'coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' and attended by angels who bear the lance and sponge like regalia. It has been seen that these instruments of the passion recur in the Æthelstan Psalter fol. 2v, where Christ is again enthroned, but unwounded. In the Benedictional of St Æthelwold, the Advent miniature on fol. 9v shows him not enthroned but in the very act of returning at his Second Coming, striding on clouds and attended by angels (Matthew 24:30–31), shouldering the cross like a triumphal standard, his garments inscribed with the apocalyptic titles. Though the wounds are not shown, the instruments of the passion borne in victory by attendant angels reveal that this is the same Christ as he 'whom they pierced'. This rare iconography of the Second Coming on fol. 9v offers a close visual parallel with the Benedictional's rendering of the western iconography of the Ascension on fol. 64v where Christ, bearing the cross-standard, similarly strides within a mandorla, even though the accompanying benediction for the feast describes him as seated. The visual parallel between fol. 64v and fol. 9v reflects the prophecy made to the disciples witnessing the Ascension that 'this same Jesus, which is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11); the verse is actually inscribed on the representation of the Ascension which forms a diptych with a scene of the Second Coming in the early Insular 'Turin fragments'.⁶² Unusually in Insular art, the Æthelstan Psalter fol. 120v uses the [86] eastern iconography of the Ascension, in which Christ is enthroned in a mandorla attended by angels, with the watching disciples clustered around the Virgin *orans* below. Essential features of this Ascension iconography re-appear in the theophany of Christ enthroned in Majesty shown on fol. 2v of the Æthelstan Psalter, with the additional materials of the heavenly choirs and instruments of the passion (Figure 1.7). The appearance of this combination in the same manuscript which contains, on fol. 21 (Figure 1.2), the earliest example of Christ shown both enthroned and bearing the wound of the passion, may well be significant.

61 O. Werckmeister, 'Three problems of tradition in pre-Carolingian figure style', *Proc Roy Ir Acad (C)* 63 (1963) 185, pl 34c; K. Weitzmann (ed), *The age of spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian art* (New York 1979) cat. 301.

62 Turin, Bibl. Nazionale, Cod. O.IV.20, fol. lav–2a, J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular MSS, 6th to 9th century*, cat. 61, pl 279–80, first half of ninth century.

The *Blickling homily* for the Ascension expounds the prophecy of Acts 1:11, 'So our Lord shall hereafter come on Doomsday, in a cloud and in the same body with which he has now ascended into heaven'.⁶³ Similarly, Ælfric was to elaborate Acts 1:11 to associate the Ascension and Second Coming. Furthermore, the physical evidence of Christ's wounds as a crucial proof of the identity of the crucified, risen, ascended and returning Lord is reiterated in Ælfric's sermons and suggests how interpretations of Acts 1:11 might have contributed to the notion of Christ bearing the marks of the passion at his Second Coming, in fulfilment of the crucifixion prophecy in John 19:37. In the previous verse of his passion narrative, St John shows that the soldiers' decision to spear Christ's side and not to break his legs, as they did the two thieves', fulfilled another Messianic prophecy, 'A bone of him shall not be broken'. Quoting this verse, Ælfric explains that thus 'the Lord rose from death sound, without any corruption, and they shall see at the great Doom him whom they cruelly pierced'. Commenting on Christ's resurrection appearance to Doubting Thomas, Ælfric reasons, 'easily might Christ have risen from death without scars, but he held the scars, because he would thereby confirm the doubtful'. The theme is continued elsewhere: 'On the fortieth day after his resurrection, the Lord ascended to heaven in sight of them all, with the same body in which he had suffered [. . .] Verily, he shall come at the end of this world with great majesty, in clouds'. Ælfric is here reflecting the common exegetical practice of interpreting Acts 1:11 as a prophecy fulfilled in Revelation 1:7.⁶⁴

While these Insular examples of the interpretation of Acts 1:11 may help in the reconstruction of the *ideas* underlying the visualisation of Christ in glory being recognisably the same person as the Christ of the crucifixion, they cannot explain how those ideas came to be widely expressed in the iconography of the wounded and enthroned Christ. The early iconography of the Ascension did not show Christ wounded and, with few exceptions, Anglo-Saxon examples do not show him enthroned. Three elements in the formulation of the wounded, enthroned image may be identified, however. First, the chain of texts (Zacharias 12:10; John 19:37; Revelation 1:7) demonstrating that the crucified Christ is the prophesied messiah and will be recognised as the glorified Lord, all mention his being pierced. St Augustine expounded St John's quotation of Zacharias at the crucifixion, 'They shall look on him whom they pierced', as 'a promise of Christ, to come in that flesh which they crucified'. Secondly, the gospel resurrection accounts (to be discussed further below) provide the authority for the exposition of the wounds of [87] the passion as the specific means of demonstrating the risen Christ's continuing inseparable humanity and divinity, both to his disciples and to future followers. A third component in the composite image is the idea of Christ seated or enthroned at his Second Coming. The throne does not simply derive from the imperial

63 R. Morris (ed), *The Blickling homilies*, EETS OS 58, 63, 73 (repr. as one vol. 1969) 122.

64 B. Thorpe (ed), *Homilies of Ælfric*, ii 235, 283; i 301. Exegetical example in *Expositio in apocalypsin* attributed to Haymon of Halberstadt (PL 117, 947).

iconography of Late Antiquity, but is sanctioned by a complex of texts colouring readings of Revelation 1:7 in which St John's crucifixion prophecy is fulfilled. In the synoptic gospels the image of enthronement is used during Christ's trial when his identity was challenged by the high priest: 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?' In affirming his identity, Christ used the language of Old Testament apocalyptic to prophesy his imminent recognition by his followers and the ultimate manifestation of his glory to all: 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven' (Matthew 26:64; cf. Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69). The enthroned image recurs in Mark's account of the Ascension, which anticipates the final revelation of Christ's divinity: 'he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God' (16:19) and it is used in the Epistles to speak of the risen and glorified Redeemer, for example Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1 and in Hebrews 1:3, 13 which quotes the prophetic use of the enthronement image in Psalms 109:1, an image several times illustrated in late Anglo-Saxon art.⁶⁵ In Bede's hymn on the Ascension and in *Christ III*, the image of the ascended Christ seated on the right hand of the Father accords with the liturgical theme of Christ as *rex gloriae* (Psalms 23:7–10).⁶⁶

The biblical texts cited so far do not describe the Last Judgement. However, some texts, using the same imagery of enthronement, clearly do, and their influence coloured interpretations of texts which do not. Ælfric, for example, like Bede and Hrabanus Maurus before him, drew on Gregory the Great's homily on the Ascension to distinguish between the image of Christ *standing* on the right hand of God (Acts 7:56) and *sitting* in St Mark's account of the Ascension (16:19). 'According to the expounder, that is rightly said that he sat after his Ascension, because a seat is befitting a judge and Christ is the true Judge who will judge and decide all things, now and also on the Last Day'.⁶⁷ Aldred, the late tenth-century translator of the Lindisfarne Gospels, follows exegetical tradition in his marginal note identifying the parousia described in Mark 14:62 with Doomsday.⁶⁸

Judgement is implied in Matthew 16:27, 'For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works', and it is vividly described in the chapter which follows Matthew's account of the parousia: the Son of Man 'shall sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them from one another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats' (25:31–32). This

65 E. Kantorowicz, 'The Quinity of Winchester', *Art Bull* 29 (1947) 73–85.

66 D. Hurst (ed), *Opera homiletica et rhythmica*, CCSL 122 (1955) 419–23, vv. 1, 28. P. Clemoes, 'Cynewulf's image of the Ascension', P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (ed), *England before the Conquest*, 293–304.

67 B. Thorpe, *Homilies of Ælfric*, i 301, 309–11. Ælfric also notes 'our Creed acknowledges Christ's seat because he is the true Judge of the living and the dead', 49. Bede's commentary on St Mark: D. Hurst (ed), CCSL 120, 646; Hrabanus Maurus, PL 110, 235; Gregory the Great, *In ascensione in domine*, PL 76, 1217.

68 W. Boyd, *Aldred's marginalia* (Exeter 1975) 41.

immediately precedes Christ's address to the blessed and the damned, often used in late Anglo-Saxon eschatological literature and summarised in inscribed texts of Matthew 25:34 and 41 in twelfth-century representations of the wounded Judge, as has been seen. Long before this iconographic formulation, the literary visualisation of the wounded and glorified Christ had been transferred from the parousia to the Last Judgement. [88]

A clear example of the telescoping technique appears in a pseudo-Augustinian sermon which conventionally expounds the Matthean apocalyptic prophecy of the coming of 'the sign of the Son of Man' as meaning that the cross will precede Christ when he comes in Judgement, 'so that those who crucified the Lord of majesty may recognise the measure of their own iniquity'. The authority for this, explains the writer, is the Lord's own declaration in the gospel that 'all the tribes of the earth shall wail'. By quoting Matthew 24:30, *et tunc plangent omnes tribus terrae*, he alludes to the comparable phrases in Zacharias 12:10 and Revelation 1:7 and so to the chain of texts concerning Christ's wound, as his final explicit quotation of John 19:37 confirms. It is the sinful who will wail when they see their accuser, the cross itself, and Christ, displaying his wounds: 'Then will they look on him whom they have pierced'.⁶⁹ St John's crucifixion prophecy is similarly fulfilled in the context of the appearance of the cross preluding a Matthean scene of Judgement in the eschatological poem from the Exeter Book, *Christ III*. Christ mounts his kingly throne and rewards all men as their works deserve (cf. Matthew 16:27, Revelation 22:12). He delivers his reproaches to sinners and displays the wounds again.⁷⁰ Thus the wounded Christ is clearly pictured enthroned. The enormous popularity of this tableau in the twelfth-century iconography of the Last Judgement has tended to obscure other important allusions in the exegetical chain of texts on which it was based.

Although the image of the wounded Christ enthroned in glory made a relatively late appearance in extant art in the Æthelstan Psalter and the Cambridge ivory, the christological statement it presents was implicit in the early iconography of the crucifixion. Despite St John's testimony that Christ was already dead on the cross when his side was pierced, from the earliest representations of the scene he was shown alive and awake, as part of an attempt to render pictorially the overall Johannine interpretation of the passion as a process of glorification (John 12:23, 13:31, 17:1). In the early Insular Durham Gospels, for example, the dual role of John 19:37 as both fulfilment of prophecy and as prophecy of the Second Coming, is particularly powerfully conveyed. Christ is shown with wounded hands and feet and pierced side, stared at by the lance-bearer and the sponge-bearer (Plate 1.1). But Christ is also a hieratic, priestly orant, alive and awake, 'clothed with a garment down to the foot' (Revelation 1:13). Elizabeth Coatsworth has aptly cited Bede's comment on this verse: *Vestitum podere. Poderis, quae tunica talaris dicitur, et est*

69 PL 39, 2052. M.J.B. Allen and D.G. Calder, *Sources and analogues of Old English poetry: the major Latin texts in translation* (Cambridge and Ottawa 1976) 98.

70 A.S. Cook (ed), *The Christ of Cynewulf* (Boston 1900) 193, 214.

*vestis sacerdotalis, Christi sacerdotium ostendit, quo se pro nobis in altari crucis obtulit hostiam Patri.*⁷¹ The *alpha* and *omega* were frequently inscribed on images of Christ enthroned in majesty; the effect of using these apocalyptic symbols of his glory in the crucifixion scene in the Durham Gospels is to show Christ enthroned on the cross. *Alpha* and *omega*, *initium* and *et finis* are inscribed either side of the cosmological cross in clear reference to the glorified Lord's self-revelation of his eternal divinity in Revelation 1:8, *Ego sum alpha et omega, principium et finis, dicit Dominus Deus; qui est, et qui erat, et qui venturus est, omnipotens*. These words complete the fulfilment of St John's crucifixion prophecy in the apocalyptic recognition of Christ's true identity in the previous [89] verse: *Ecce venit cum nubibus, et videbit eum omnis oculus, et qui eum pupugerunt. Et plangent se super eum omnes tribus terrae*. The words inscribed on the cross at the crucifixion were intended by the Jews to be read ironically as a taunting accusation of Christ's messianic claim (Matthew 27:37); flanked by the *alpha* and *omega* on the Durham Gospels cross, the inscription is instead revealed as a proclamation of his royal title: *Hic est Jesus rex Judeorum* (cf. John 19:21–22).

The two angelic beings shown above the cross arms evoke a series of scriptural texts concerning the Tabernacle, the Temple and the New Jerusalem, which are often cross-referenced in exegesis and were of enormous interest to early medieval commentators. Exodus 25:18–22 describes how God instructed Moses to make two golden cherubim, to be placed at either end of the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle. God promised, 'and there I will meet thee and commune with thee [. . .] from between the two cherubim'. Commentators, including Bede, interpreted the two cherubim as denoting the two Covenants, one proclaiming the future incarnation of the Lord, the other that the incarnation is accomplished.⁷² From the time of Jerome, this Exodus image of the two cherubim of the propitiatory, reiterated and elaborated in the description of the two cherubim placed over the Ark of the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6:23–28; 2 Chronicles 3:10–13) was a popular application of the enigmatic prophecy of Habacuc 3:2 that the Lord would be made known or recognised between two animals. Their presence at the crucifixion shows the Lord revealed or made known on the cross.

Isaiah's vision of the glory of the Lord in the Temple is one of the Old Testament theophanies underlying the New Testament apocalyptic vision of Christ's majesty. The hymn of the seraphim above the throne of the Lord in the Temple (Isaiah 6:12–13) is also unceasingly chanted before the divine throne in Revelation 4:2–8, a heavenly liturgy in which the Sanctus of the earthly liturgy at the eucharistic altar shares. In the Durham Gospels crucifixion the two angelic attendants of the cross are depicted as seraphim, accompanied by an abbreviated allusion to the chant heard by Isaiah, 'Holy, holy, holy'. The effect of associating the crucifixion with

71 PL 93, 136, noted in C.D. Verey, T.J. Brown, E. Coatsworth (ed), *The Durham Gospels* (Durham, Cath. Lib. A.11.17), Early Engl. MSS in Facs 20 (Copenhagen 1980) 61. Transcription of marginal inscriptions on fol. 38v around the Crucifixion, 59.

72 *De tabernaculo; De templo*: CCSL 119A, 19–20, 178–81.

these scriptural images is to extend their various connotations of throne and altar to the cross. This was not a piece of pure invention on the part of the Insular artist. Isaiah's vision of the Lord attended by seraphim and enthroned in glory, *excelsus et elevatus* (Isaiah 6:1), is referred to in John 12:38–41, directly following Christ's prophecy of the crucifixion: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me'. As in John 3:14 and 8:28, *exaltatio* is here punningly used: in being raised to his death on the cross, Christ is also exalted in the sense of being glorified. Commenting on those who will see the cross but not perceive its significance as a revelation of divine glory, St John actually cites God's reproof of Isaiah's own contemporaries for their similar spiritual blindness (John 12:38–41, Isaiah 6:9–10).

The idea of exaltation and enthronement, and the paradoxical identification of Christ's death and glorification within a single image in the Durham Gospels crucifixion scene, is supplemented by the marginal inscription: *Auctorem mortis [90] deiciens, vitam nostram restituens, si tamen compatiamur; surrexit a mortuis, [sedet ad] dexteram patris; ut nos cum resuscitados simul et regnare [faciat]*.

Because of the contemporary commentary on the Durham Gospels crucifixion image offered by its own inscriptions, it is possible to demonstrate its exegetical character. Its image of angelic beings attending the cross/throne/altar is a particularly allusive meditation on scripture, but its essential christology is a recurring theme in Insular art. It is evident, for example, in the later St Gall Codex 51, 266–67, though diluted over two facing pages depicting the crucifixion and the Second Coming. The sponge-bearer and the lance-bearer again very markedly look up at the piercing of Christ's side, their figure type and gaze closely reproduced in the complementary scene showing the apostles looking up at the glorified Christ at his Second Coming, as in the iconography of the ascension. The expository tradition the Durham Gospels scene reflects is continued and well represented in the widely known *De laudibus sanctae crucis* of Alcuin's pupil, Hrabanus Maurus (780–856). This large collection of *carmina figurata*, copied in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of the Benedictine reform period, is a series of meditations, highly eclectic and dense with scriptural allusion, on the significance of the cross. Each is accompanied by a diagram of the cross literally composed of key texts hidden in other texts, particularly in acrostics and palindromes, so that their very deciphering demonstrates the mysterious nature of the truths they enigmatically reveal or affirm. Figurata I (above, n 60) depicts the cross in the form of the body of Christ, stripped and with outstretched arms as at the crucifixion, yet with his apocalyptic royal titles concealed in the inscriptions of which the image is composed. It also shows the letters *alpha* and *omega* either side of Christ's head and, like the Durham Gospels crucifixion, refers directly to Revelation 1:8 by explaining *Ipse quoque alpha et omega, quia initium et finis*. The verses making up Christ's body describe his releasing the bonds of tyranny with his blood and leading the blessed to the stars to receive a crown. Other similarities are evident in figurata IV which depicts the cross attended by two cherubim, flanking the shaft, and two seraphim above the cross arms. They are specifically identified in the inscriptions with the two cherubim of the Old Testament propitiatory and with Isaiah's vision of the seraphim and

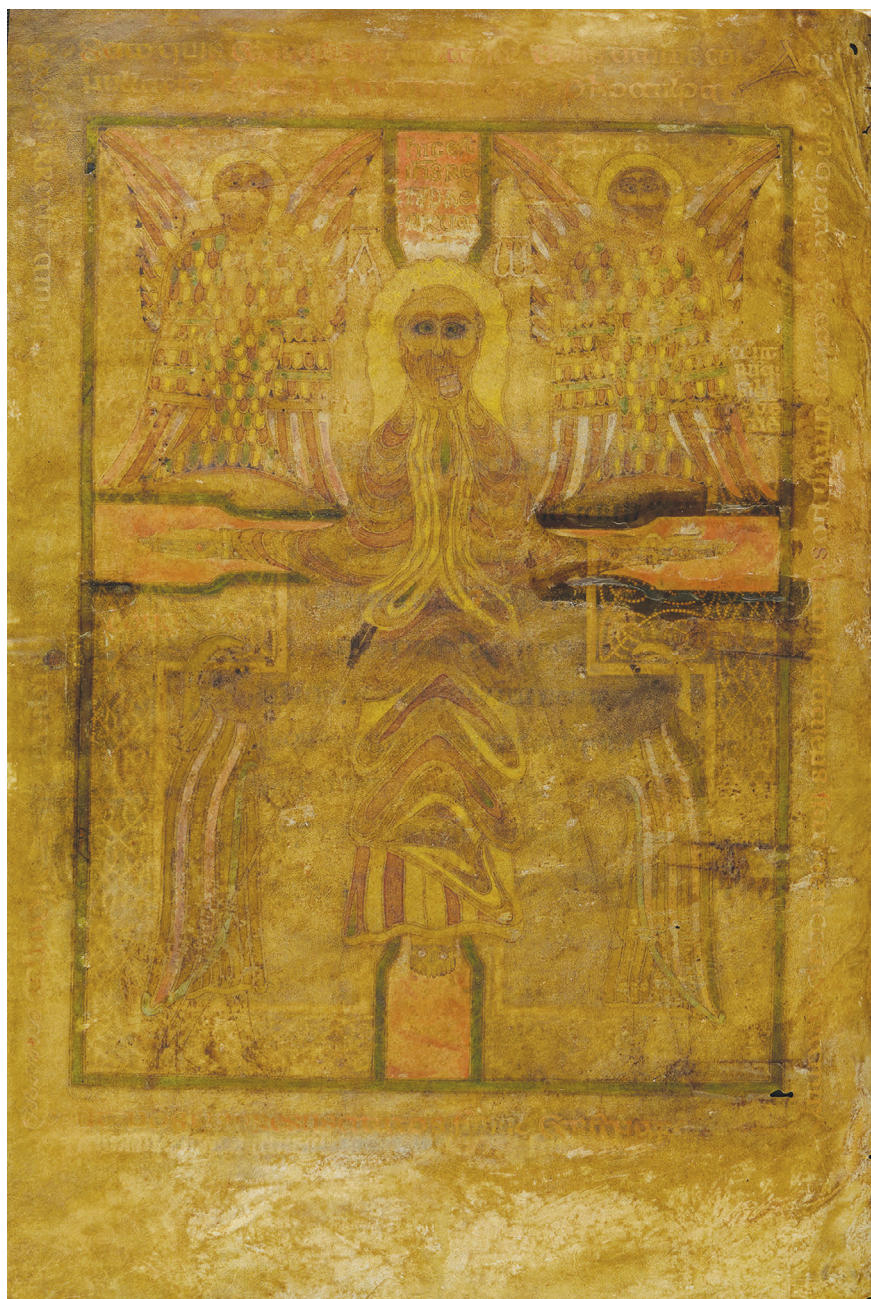


Plate 1.1 The Durham Gospels. Reproduced by kind permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral. MS A.II.17, fol. 38.3 v.

are interpreted as prefiguring the redeeming cross. Moreover, in the text of which it is composed, the cross itself is described as the throne of the King.

The text and image in the Durham Gospels crucifixion is not merely anticipating the future Judgement but implicitly appeals to present beholders to 'look on him whom they pierced' and to see both the crucified and glorified Redeemer, whose inseparable sufferings and triumph they are invited to share.

This section began by considering the earliest known representation of the enthroned and wounded Christ, the Æthelstan Psalter, fol. 21r, which may now be re-examined in the light of the foregoing discussion of enthronement imagery. The Durham Gospels present the crucifixion as an image of majesty; the Æthelstan Psalter uses an image of majesty to recall the crucifixion. The theme of the perpetual heavenly liturgy, alluded to in the Durham Gospels scene of [91] Christ symbolically enthroned on the altar of the cross and adored by seraphim, is more explicitly evoked in the Æthelstan Psalter's depiction of the wounded Christ literally enthroned on a sacrificial altar flanked by tonsured, stoled and vested priests from among the surrounding ranks of the heavenly host (Figure 1.2). The early medieval image of Christ enthroned in glory was not only eschatological: it often carried a eucharistic connotation and was freely used on altars, in illustrations of the text of the Sanctus and canon of the mass, and on covers of gospel books which are themselves 'enthroned' on the eucharistic altar. The particular depiction of Christ in the Æthelstan Psalter, fol. 21, as at once sacrificial victim, the eucharist, and the glorified Lord is unique, but has a close thematic parallel in the Carolingian Majestas iconography which shows Christ as both the Agnus Dei, acclaimed in the eucharistic chant and in John 1:19, and the apocalyptic Lamb that was slain and glorified (Revelation 5:12). The Majestas Agni, sometimes shown with the single wound in the side, is variously accompanied by the lance, sponge and cross, with the book of life, the chalice or even the figure of Ecclesia.⁷³ Similarly, other features in the Æthelstan Psalter's distinctive representation of Christ's body marked with the wound of the cross, enthroned on an altar over a representation of a church and surrounded by named heavenly choirs, have a broad thematic parallel in figurata V of *De laudibus sanctae crucis* depicting the named choirs of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs surrounding the cross and inscribed as *spirituali aedificio domus Dei*.

From outside the upper frame of the Æthelstan Psalter miniature, four disembodied heads blow inwards, like classical personifications of the four winds. In

73 'I offer daily on the altar of the holy cross the undefiled Lamb', Thorpe, *Homilies of Ælfric*, i 591. Examples of the iconography of the Agnus Dei and the Heavenly Liturgy in E. Okasha and J. O'Reilly, 'An Anglo-Saxon portable altar: inscription and iconography', *J Warburg Courtauld Inst* 47 (1984) 40–41, 47–48. Robert Deshman, 'The imagery of the living Ecclesia and the English monastic reform', P.E. Szarmach (ed), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon culture* (Kalamazoo MI 1986) 261–82 relates the altar iconography of the Æthelstan Psalter to the ecclesiological theme of Christ as the cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6–8, Ephesians 2:20 etc.), a concept 'closely associated with the theme of sacrifice' (268).

each of the four corners is an angel, turning inwards. Christ in glory is surrounded by ranks of the blessed, identified by inscription as all the choirs of martyrs, confessors and virgins. This suggests not the Last Judgement itself, but the synoptic gospels' description of the coming of the Son of Man: 'And then shall he send his angels and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven' (Mark 13:27; Matthew 24:31). In Matthew's version, this immediately follows the verse prophesying the coming of the sign of the Son of Man: 'And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory'. It has been seen that this verse was associated in patristic exegesis with the similar passage in Revelation 1:7, and hence with the chain of texts concerned with the recognition of Christ's true identity through his wound. The Æthelstan Psalter miniature's central scene of Christ with pierced side, identified by the accompanying symbols of *alpha* and *omega* and entirely surrounded by the elect who gaze upon him, may evoke the apocalyptic fulfilment of St John's crucifixion prophecy when 'every eye shall see him' and he 'whom they pierced' reveals himself to be *alpha* and *omega* (Revelation 1:7–8).

The four Anglo-Saxon miniatures of the Æthelstan Psalter present a series of revelations, from the incarnation to the Second Coming. In the nativity scene the infant Christ, adored by ox and ass, is raised up on an object labelled *presepe dni* but depicted as a two-tiered stone altar of architectural dimensions, [92] reminiscent of the altar on which the wounded Christ is elevated on fol. 21. The altar/manger is set beneath arcading and a miniature representation of a church. This iconography of the incarnation follows standard exegetical eucharistic interpretations of the Christ child as the heavenly food on which the faithful feed (represented by the ox and ass).⁷⁴ The missing miniature in the Psalter may have continued the theme. It is generally thought to have been a crucifixion (partly because of its positioning at the second division of the Psalter); if so, it may have shown Christ's side wound, possibly the actual piercing.⁷⁵ A scene of Christ wounded on the altar /throne of the cross could focus meditation on the standard exegetical interpretation of the side wound as the source of the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. The enthronement theme is continued in fol. 120v which uses Eastern iconography of the ascension to show Christ seated in glory, rather

74 Æthelstan Psalter nativity scene on detached leaf, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 484, fol. 85, E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, pl 30. Bede follows pope Gregory the Great's eucharistic interpretation of the Lucan nativity account: D. Hurst (ed), *Beda's Opera*, ii 3, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, CCSL 120, 48–49.

75 London, British Library, Cotton Titus D XXVII, fol. 65v has been described as an eleventh-century copy of the lost miniature, M. Woods, 'The making of king Athelstan's empire', 268 and n 84, though the Titus Crucifixion scene does not show Christ's side wound. The depiction of the wound, either in the iconography of Longinus piercing Christ's side, or in the tableau of Mary and John contemplating the Crucified, seems more probable in view of the appearance of the wound, the lance and the sacrificial altar elsewhere in the Æthelstan Psalter miniatures.

than standing, as in the common Western tradition. Below, on the same axis, the Virgin is shown as the figure of the church on earth. The scenes inserted at fol. 2v and fol. 21 show Christ enthroned in majesty among the heavenly choirs, including the apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins of the church. The Virgin Mary, St Peter and St Paul are prominently shown as representatives of the church in fol. 2v (Figure 1.7). The presentation of Abel's offering at Christ's throne (set above a miniature church) reinforces the connotations of the heavenly altar and recalls one of the most common prefigurings of Christ's sacrifice, cited during the Roman canon of the mass. Despite their stylistic differences and possible derivation from different models, the miniatures in the Æthelstan Psalter do not seem to be a haphazard collection but a selection on Christological themes which it is known from other pictorial and literary sources preoccupied contemporaries, namely, the recognition of the incarnate, crucified and risen Christ as one Person; his exaltation and enthronement; the continuing presence of his body in the sacramental church.

Read in the context of its accompanying illustrations and of earlier Insular iconography, fol. 21 of the Æthelstan Psalter can greatly assist in understanding the formation of the image of the enthroned and wounded Christ and the kind of associations it might have suggested for contemporaries. However, it cannot be regarded as the sole 'source' of the Cambridge ivory: there are many differences. Although the foregoing material demonstrates the frequent early medieval cross-referencing and shape-shifting between the images of throne, altar and the cross, it has been seen that the pictorial representation of the wounded Christ literally enthroned remained exceptional before the twelfth century; earlier representations of his side wound appear in the context of the crucifixion and resurrection. Unlike the Æthelstan Psalter, the Cambridge ivory combines the image of the cross and the crucifixion side wound with a gospel text taken from Christ's display of his wound at the resurrection. An investigation of the exegesis and early iconography of the wound in the context of the crucifixion and resurrection may therefore illumine aspects of the Cambridge ivory which remain unexplained by comparison simply with the Æthelstan Psalter or with later representations of the Last Judgement, such as the Gunhild Cross. [93]

III. Crucifixion: 'They shall look on him whom they pierced'

The original context of the words *Videte manus et pedes* is important in assessing their function in the Cambridge ivory's inscription. They form the opening words of Christ's resurrection injunction to his disciples, *Videte manus meas et pedes meos quia ego sum: palpate et videte: quia spiritus carnem et ossa non habet, sicut me videtis habere* (Luke 24:39). The reiterated word *videte* is ambiguous, forming a command not simply to look at the wounds but to see, with the eye of faith, that the crucified and resurrected Christ are one. When combined with the image of the wounded and enthroned Christ on the Cambridge ivory, this resurrection text, prefaced with the words *O vos omnes*, asserts the identification of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord and becomes

a continuing invitation to behold Christ's wounds. Similarly, the verb in *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt* (John 19:37) can apply both to those who actually witnessed the crucifixion and to those who continue to look on Christ's wounded side. The command *Videte* inscribed on the Cambridge ivory economically doubles to refer not only to the wounds in Christ's hands and feet, mentioned in the text, but to the wound in his side, depicted in the accompanying image.

Early medieval crucifixion iconography uses various devices to contrast what was physically seen by some at the crucifixion and spiritually understood by others, as a means of conveying an insight into the event's continuing significance for the present beholder. The Good Friday ceremonies have this very function: in his commentary on Psalms 21, Augustine said that the yearly commemoration of the crucifixion, in which the psalm was used, 'brings before our eyes what once happened long ago and stirs in us the same emotions as if we beheld our Lord hanging upon the cross; not in mockery, of course, but as believers. For as he hung on the tree he was mocked; seated in heaven he is worshipped'.

The crucifixion iconography illustrating Psalms 21 in the Carolingian Stuttgart Psalter provides a particularly good example of the way in which the image of beholding Christ's wounds was rendered as a metaphor of spiritual insight or blindness. On fol. 25v two figures, one in mock genuflection, look and point up at Christ, illustrating the line of the facing page, *omnes videntes me desiserunt me*. Augustine related v.18, *ipsi vero consideraverunt et inspexerunt me*, to those who merely see 'with the eye of the body': *Consideraverunt, et non intellexerunt, conspexerunt, et non viderunt*.⁷⁶ Below this verse in the Stuttgart Psalter, fol. 27r, two seated soldiers with spears and shields vacantly point up at Christ (Plate 1.2). The second half of the verse, *Diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea, et super vestem mea miserunt sortem*, quoted in the gospel accounts of the crucifixion and ritually enacted in the liturgy of Holy Week,⁷⁷ is illustrated by two more seated figures below the cross, holding Christ's robe. St Matthew specifically says of those who divided and gambled for Christ's garments that, 'sitting down they watched him there' (27:35–36). Matthew sees their staring as fulfilling the Messianic prophecy of Psalm 21:18. The Stuttgart Psalter shows them doing so unknowingly; one points up at Christ, the other points to his own eye, signifying he is looking only 'with [94] the eye of the body'. Uncomprehendingly, they hold up Christ's seamless garment, uniquely described in St John's account of the crucifixion and alluding to the seamless priestly robe of Aaron's line (Exodus

76 Facsimile, E.T. De Wald, *The Stuttgart Psalter* (Princeton 1930). Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, CCL 38 (1956) 127. Passage quoted above from S. Hebgin and F. Corrigan (trs), *St Augustine on the Psalms* i (London 1960) 207.

77 The verse is said at the ceremonial stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday. The *Regularis Concordia* directs that when the words *Partiti sunt vestimenta mea* are reached in the Good Friday reading of St John's account of the passion, two deacons 'as it were like thieves [. . .] shall strip from the altar the cloth which had before been placed under the book of the gospels', T. Symons (ed), *Regularis Concordia* (London 1953) 42.

28:32). They are similarly blind to the presence of the two angels who reverently attend Christ on the cross, honouring his divinity. Unlike the crucifixion scene on fol. 25v, Christ is here shown not only with wounded hands and feet, but with wounded side, which is not apparently called for by the Stuttgart Psalter's Gallican text of the line *Ipsi vero consideraverunt et inspexerunt me*. However, it is probable that the Psalter's illustrations were partly influenced by earlier pictures, some of which illustrated an alternative version of the psalter text. The Hebraic version of the line (*Que ipsi respicientes viderunt in me*) or the Vetus Latina version (*Ipsi vero aspiciunt et videntes me*) would have sharpened allusions to the related texts about looking at Christ, which also refer to Christ being pierced: *Et aspiciunt ad me, confixerunt* (Zacharias 12:10) and *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt* (John 19:37). In the Stuttgart Psalter the associations of Psalms 21 with the liturgy of Good Friday, the influence of variant readings and their illustration, of scriptural cross-reference and exegesis all combine in the representation of the wounded Christ on fol. 27r, which tacitly urges the viewer to 'look on him whom they pierced', with the eye of faith.

It is part of the irony and paradox of the seeing metaphor that the lance-bearer who historically pierced Christ's side is often, in Carolingian and Ottonian crucifixion scenes depicting Christ's cosmic sovereignty, shown in an attitude of acclamation with raised hand or even bowed knee. Of the four attendant figures in the Durham Gospels crucifixion, which reveals Christ's glorious divinity, the lance-bearer Longinus is alone distinguished by being named (Plate 1.1). The St Gall Codex 51, p 266 depicts the apocryphal story of Longinus's blindness being healed at the crucifixion by blood from the wounded side of Christ falling on his eyes. The identity of the Crucified, hidden from the spiritually blind at the crucifixion, is here revealed to all in the juxtaposed scene of the Second Coming. One variant of the apocryphal story of Longinus's blindness (preserved in late prose versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*) explained that the blood from Christ's side ran down the shaft of the lance onto Longinus's hand and that he then wiped his eyes with his hand and his sight was restored. Vestiges of the story may be discerned in archaisising English pictorial representations somewhat earlier than the surviving literary texts noted by Peebles: Longinus markedly raises his hand to his eyes as he pierces Christ's side in the Tiberius Psalter c. 1050, in the Canterbury Psalter leaf c. 1140 in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and in the Munich Psalter c. 1200–1210, whose illustrative cycle is thought to have been transmitted through an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon exemplar.⁷⁸

78 R.J. Peebles, *The legend of Longinus in ecclesiastical tradition and in English literature and its connection with the Holy Grail*, Bryn Mawr College Monographs 60 (Pennsylvania 1911) 87–89. P. Harbison, 'The bronze crucifixion plaque said to be from St John's (Rinnagan), near Athlone', *J Ir Archaeol* 2 (1984) 6, 15. London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius C.VI, fol. 13, E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, pl 311; V. and A. Museum 661 recto, C.M. Kauffmann, *Romanesque MSS*, pl 179; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibl. Clm. 835, fol. 26, N.J. Morgan, *Early Gothic manuscripts i* (Oxford 1982) 71, pl 71. In a book of Hours, London, British Library, Add. 49999, fol. 47v, c.



Plate 1.2 The Stuttgart Psalter. Stuttgart, Wuerttembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. bibl. fol. 23, f. 27r.

The Longinus story was understood in the light of, and sometimes merged with, the synoptic gospels' account of the centurion who 'saw' the identity of the Crucified when he recognised 'Truly, this was the Son of God' (Mark 15:39). Ælfric does not use the story of Longinus's blindness but in his metrical [95] vernacular homily on the Exaltation of the Cross he clearly states that the centurion 'who wickedly pierced (Christ) in his holy side', was called Longinus and that as the sun was darkened he turned to Christ, striking his breast and proclaiming *Vere Filius Dei est hic*. He was subsequently instructed in the faith and baptised, 'washed from his former deeds', and, after martyrdom, posthumously healed the blindness of his former judge. In a homily for Palm Sunday, Ælfric repeats the synoptic gospels' account of the centurion's recognition of Christ and the apocryphal story of his conversion, but also describes how one of the soldiers opened Christ's side and that the water poured out with the blood 'was our baptism' to wash away original sin.⁷⁹ Such harmonisation of the synoptic and Johannine accounts of the crucifixion was not the whim of an individual artist or writer but was perpetuated through the liturgy, which constantly employs the exegetical technique of juxtaposing texts from disparate sources. A most striking example occurs in the compressed and eclectic response in the third nocturn on Good Friday: *Viderunt in quem transfixerunt: et plangent super eum omnes tribus terrae dicentes: Vere Filius Dei erat iste*.⁸⁰ The acclamation of the centurion in Mark 15:39 has been combined with two key texts concerning the piercing of Christ's side, John 19:37 and Revelation 1:7. The spiritual insight of the centurion/lance-bearer in a moment of historical time is thus recalled in the liturgical commemoration of the crucifixion but, presented with the other two texts, it also has a tropological and anagogical dimension, exhorting present penitential recognition of the true identity of the Crucified, and celebrating the revelation of his divinity in the apocalyptic vision.

From the late Anglo-Saxon period in which the Cambridge ivory's image of the wounded Christ was produced, the earlier Insular crucifixion iconography showing the piercing of Christ's side is preserved in a few ivories and stone carvings and in one manuscript, the Tiberius Psalter. Much more usually, in the later period, the Virgin and St John appear at the foot of the cross, another detail unique to St John's account. A number of these examples depict Christ with all five wounds and, of these, several also unmistakably show Christ to be dead.⁸¹ In the frontispiece of the Ramsey Psalter, Mary's grief is movingly portrayed, and

1240, Longinus raises his hand to his eyes while a figure on the other side of Christ points up at him uncomprehendingly, Morgan, *Gothic MSS*, pl 243.

79 R. Morris (ed), *Legends of the Holy Rood* EETS OS 46, 107; Ælfric's *Lives of the saints* EETS 94, lines 184–94; Thorpe (ed), *Ælfric's Homilies*, ii 259–61.

80 R. Hesbert (ed), *Corpus antiphonarium officii* iv (Rome 1970) 458.

81 London, British Library, Harley 2904, fol. 3v (Ramsey Psalter); New York Pierpont Morgan Library, 869, fol. 9v (the Arenberg Gospels); British Library, Cotton Tiberius C.VI, fol. 13 (Tiberius Psalter); Pierpont Morgan Library, 709, fol. 1v (Judith of Flanders's gospel book); Cambridge,

in Judith of Flanders's gospel book Christ's slumped dead body is shown with great pathos. Yet none of the representations of the pierced Christ, dead on the cross, is solely concerned with depicting his suffering humanity. As in the early Insular type, though with different iconographic conventions and suggestions of a more affective spirituality, they continue to intimate his glorious divinity and the triumph of the Redemption, veiled to most at the crucifixion. Between St John's account of the piercing of Christ's side and his interpretation of it as a fulfilment of the prophecy 'They shall look on him whom they pierced', is the assertion of his own eye-witness testimony of the event in order that others might believe: *et qui vidit testimonium perhibuit: et verum est testimonium eius* (John 19:35). The testimony is repeated in John 21:24, following the identification of the evangelist with the beloved disciple: *Hic est discipulus ille qui testimonium perhibet de his, et scripsit haec; et scimus quia verum est* [96] *testimonium eius*. In the late tenth-century Ramsey Psalter, Harley 2904, fol. 3v, John at the foot of the cross abandons his traditional pose of the classical orator and instead looks up at the dead and pierced body of Christ, vigorously authenticating his testimony by writing on a scroll 'hic est discipulus qui testimonium perhibuit' (Figure 1.9).⁸² This strange detail may have originated in an interest in visualising the sacred events in a concrete way, evident in other instances of unusual iconography in late Anglo-Saxon art, such as the 'disappearing Christ' at the Ascension or the rough-hewn timber cross at the crucifixion.⁸³ But such motifs are not mere anecdotal embellishments of the narrative, and two mid-eleventh-century representations of St John writing at the Crucifixion suggest that this motif, too had, or developed, a theological purpose.

St John writes in a golden book in the prefatory miniature of the crucifixion in the Gospels of Judith of Flanders. Christ's dead body hangs heavily from the cross, his five wounds are evident, his mother staunches his bleeding side. Clouds fill the heavens and both sun and moon veil their faces. The scene has an apocalyptic atmosphere, evocative of the synoptic gospels' prophecies that at the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven 'the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light' (Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24, cf. Revelation 6:12); Matthew immediately continues with the prophecy of the 'sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn [. . .]', linked by similar phrasing to Revelation 1:7 in which St John's crucifixion prophecy is fulfilled. St Luke adds: 'And when these things come to pass, then look up and lift your heads for your redemption draweth nigh' (21:28). Ælfric includes these three synoptic prophecies

University Library, Ff.1.23, fol. 88 (the Winchcombe Psalter) in E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, pl 142, 171, 311, 289.

82 C. Niver, W. Koehler (ed), *Medieval studies in memory of A. Kingsley Porter* ii (Cambridge MA 1939) 684–86.

83 M. Schapiro, 'The image of the disappearing Christ', *Gazette des Beaux Arts* (1943) 135–52; J. O'Reilly, 'The rough-hewn cross in Anglo-Saxon art', M. Ryan (ed), *Ireland and Insular art A.D. 500–1200* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy 1987) 153–58.

in his description of the Second Coming in an Advent homily.⁸⁴ The synoptic apocalyptic passages all preface the passion narratives and permeate their descriptions of the cosmic upheaval at the crucifixion 'when there was darkness over the whole earth'. The crucifixion itself is therefore presented as the manifestation of Christ's glory which the Second Coming will not amplify but simply reveal and make unavoidably recognisable. In Judith of Flanders's crucifixion miniature the cross is represented as a rough-hewn timber construction, but ambiguously, so that, seen with St John's eye of faith, the dead wood is already recognisable as the Tree of Life. The mid-eleventh-century Winchcombe Psalter shows the only other extant Anglo-Saxon example of both sun and moon veiled. The cosmic significance of the crucifixion is further revealed, not by utilising the rough-hewn timber motif, but by simply inscribing the cross *lignum vit(a)e*. St John, looking up at Christ with pierced side perceives his divine identity and writes in a book, *et ego vidi et testimonium*.⁸⁵

The evangelist was also regarded as the author of the Apocalypse, which opens with his eye-witness testimony, *qui testimonium perhibuit Iesu Christi, quaecumque vidit* (Revelation 1:2), recalling his attestation from the foot of the cross (John 19:35). The very first of St John's recorded visions in the Apocalypse is the fulfilment of his own prophecy made at the crucifixion, 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him: and they also which pierced him' (Revelation 1:7). This same Lord, now exalted and identified as *alpha et omega; principium et [97] finis* (Revelation 1:8), then directly commands John 'what thou seest, write in a book [. . .] Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter' (Revelation 1:11, 19). John's eye-witness testimony, recorded in his book, is again conspicuous in the culminating vision of the tree and water of life and the reiteration of the Lord's identity as *alpha et omega* (Revelation 22:1–13), a passage which in exegesis and the liturgy was specifically related to the piercing of Christ's side on the cross. The Easter vigil antiphon *Vidi aquam*, drawing on the exegesis of a chain of texts (Ezekiel 47:1–2; John 2:19–22, 19:34; Revelation 22:1–3), enjoins the faithful to 'see' the effusion of Christ's wounded side for what it really is, the sacramental water of life.⁸⁶

A remnant of this late Anglo-Saxon iconography survives in the figure of St John with stylus and writing tablets in the crucifixion scene of the Winchester Psalter, fol. 22.⁸⁷ It is combined with other details peculiar to John's account: the piercing of Christ's side, the breaking of the thieves' legs, the presence of the Virgin

84 Thorpe, *Homilies of Ælfric*, i 609–13.

85 The Winchcombe Psalter, Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff.i, 23, fol. 88.

86 The motif of St John writing at the crucifixion is more fully discussed in J. O'Reilly, 'St John as a figure of the contemplative life: text and image in the art of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform', Millennial Conference on St Dunstan and his Times, Canterbury 1988 (proceedings forthcoming).

87 F. Wormald, *The Winchester Psalter*, pl 25. In addition to the four Anglo-Saxon examples, C. Niver, 'A psalter in the B.M.', 686, cites the ivory cover of New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 651 (A. Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen* iv (Berlin 1926) pl 6, 'c. 1100, probably Belgian').



Figure 1.9 The Ramsey Psalter. © The British Library Board. MS Harley 2904, fol. 3v.

who, with John, is awkwardly combined with the figures of the lance-bearer and the sponge-bearer. One of the details of the crucifixion on which all four gospels concur is that Christ was crucified not just with two thieves but between them, ‘in the midst’. St Mark says this fulfilled the Messianic prophecy: ‘He shall be numbered among the transgressors’ (Isaiah 53:12; Mark 15:28), but Jerome also saw it as one of the fulfilments of the enigmatic prophecy of Habacuc 3:2 that the Lord would be made known or recognised between two animals: *In medio duorum animalium innotesceris; dum appropinquaeverint anni, cognosceris*. This interpretation was particularly stressed by Bede in his commentary on the Cantic of Habacuc, and was cited in Amalarius of Metz’s exposition of the Good Friday liturgy in his standard commentary on the mass, well known in late Anglo-Saxon monastic circles.⁸⁸ The Old Latin text of the opening of the Cantic formed the tract for the

⁸⁸ Jerome, *Commentariorum in Abacuc*, II iii 2, M. Adriaen (ed), *Sanctus Hieronymus, Commentarii in prophetas minores*, CCSL 76A (1970) 621; Bede, *In canticum Abacuc*, CCSL 119B (1983) 383;

Good Friday liturgy, appeared in the office of the Exaltation of the Cross and was recalled every Friday in the monastic office of Lauds. The image of Christ crucified between two thieves as a fulfilment of prophecy and as a paradoxical manifestation of his glorious divinity, was the context for the earliest surviving representations of the piercing of Christ's side by Longinus, and appears in Middle Byzantine and Ottonian art. A late ninth- or early tenth-century Breton gospel book, whose various early sources include Insular art and which came to England in the tenth century, has full-page textual illustrations *within* the gospel text. With the exception of the Book of Kells, this feature has been described as 'unknown in western continental illuminated manuscripts before the Ottonian period when it appears in German art, probably as a result of Greek influence'.⁸⁹ The crucifixion scene in the Breton gospels immediately follows the text of Luke 23:33, describing Christ between the two thieves but the picture combines this detail with allusion to the specifically Johannine image of Christ's wounded side by showing the figure of Ecclesia with a chalice held to his side. In the Golden Gospels of Henry III, a crucifixion scene combining the piercing of Christ's side and the two thieves appears in the context of St Mark's Gospel, inscribed *Et crucifixerunt eum et cum med duos latrones*.⁹⁰ [98]

The following verses in Mark show the bystanders failing to 'see' or recognise in the crucifixion the fulfilment of prophecy and blindly demanding a sign of Christ's Messianic kingship. With unconscious irony, they challenge him to come down from the cross, *ut videamus, et credamus* (Mark 15:32). St Luke's version similarly describes the unseeing onlookers: *Et stabat populus spectans, et deridebant eum principes cum eis* (Luke 23:35). In the expanded iconography of the crucifixion in Byzantine and Ottonian art showing Christ between two thieves with his side being pierced, the gazing, pointing onlookers can themselves be seen as unwittingly fulfilling Zacharias' prophecy 'and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced'. This expanded crucifixion iconography occurs in eclectic twelfth-century English manuscripts. In Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 120, fol. 3v, gesticulating Jewish leaders in two groups of onlookers point to the piercing of Christ's side, but in the Winchester Psalter fol. 22, the bystanders are shown as two groups of small disembodied heads in profile staring at Christ being pierced. It is possible this preserves a combination of features – the two thieves, the pierced side and the onlookers – known to early Insular artists.

J.M. Hanssens (ed), *Amalarii Episcopi Opera omnia* ii (Vatican 1950) 92. For a possible reminiscence of this text in early Insular art see É. Ó Carragáin, 'Christ over the beasts and the Agnus Dei: two multivalent panels on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses', P. Szarmach (ed), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon culture* (Kalamazoo, MI 1986) 377–403.

⁸⁹ Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum (ex-Bradfer-Lawrence collection), fol. 125, F. Wormald in J.J.G. Alexander (ed), *An early Breton gospel book*, Roxburghe Club (Cambridge 1977) 6, pl G. A large cycle of illustrations (now missing) has since been postulated for an early ninth-century Insular MS: Mildred Budny, *The Royal Bible*, BL MS I. E. VI (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London 1985).

⁹⁰ Escorial, Codex Vitras 17, A. Boeckler, *The Golden Gospel Book of Henry III* (Berlin 1933) 91.

In the Book of Kells fol. 124r, the highly ornamented text *Tunc crucifixerant XPI cum eo duos latrones* occupies the whole page (Plate 1.3). The text's margins contain three groups of small disembodied heads in profile, all gazing across at the opposite blank page, which was surely reserved for an illustration of the crucifixion. Similar figures have the function of relating text and illustration on fol. 7v–8r. George Henderson has suggested 'the watchers on fol. 124 are most likely to be the Christians who in the Good Friday liturgy are called upon to venerate the cross'.⁹¹ By representing not simply those who physically witnessed the crucifixion but the faithful who continue to ponder its significance, they could serve the further non-narrative function of fulfilling Zacharias' prophecy, 'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced'.

The Kells crucifixion text on fol. 124 describing Christ between two thieves is not from John's gospel but from Matthew 27:38. However, the Breton and Ottonian examples cited above allude to or directly show the Johannine iconography of the piercing of Christ's side not only within the text of a synoptic gospel but specifically related to its description of Christ crucified between two thieves. Furthermore, the piercing of Christ's side was a standard part of early Insular crucifixion iconography and in the early example of the Durham Gospels is placed, not within the text of John but on the verso of the framed text of St Matthew's gospel ending where, as has been seen, it makes a christological and eschatological statement. Some such interpretative depiction of the crucifixion on fol. 123v in Kells would have offered a pictorial amplification of the words opposite, whose very arrangement suggests a spiritual interpretation of the text. Surrounded by the watching figures, the text *Tunc crucifixerant XPI cum eo duos latrones* is written in a great *crux decussata* shape, identified with the *chi* of Christ's name which itself forms the climax of the elaborate series of revelations about his identity in the prefatory illustrations to Matthew's gospel. [99]

The foregoing examples illustrate the variety with which early medieval crucifixion iconography exploits the gospels' allusions to groups or individuals looking at Christ on the cross as an image of spiritual insight. What was physically seen by the Jews and the Roman soldiery who crucified Christ is contrasted with what was discerned by Longinus, the centurion and St John. Implicitly the faithful are called upon to 'look on him whom they pierced' and to share the vision of the crucifixion as a cosmic, apocalyptic event, a divinely ordained fulfilment of prophecy and a revelation of Christ's nature.

IV. Resurrection

In addition to St John's account of the crucifixion there is only one other gospel reference to Christ's wounded side, in the same evangelist's story of the

91 Dublin, Trinity College, MS A.1.6 (58), E.H. Alton, P. Meyer, *Evangeliorum Quattuor Codex Cenannensis* (Olten-Lausanne 1951). George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: the Insular gospel books, 650–800* (London 1981) 164; see also Suzanne Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy: the Chi-Rho page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio* 36 (1980) 142.

incredulity of Thomas (John 20:19–29). On seeing the wounds of the passion in the risen Christ, Thomas saw Christ, in the sense of understanding who he was: ‘My Lord and my God’ (20:28). The two titles in Thomas’s acclamation, inscribed above one of the earliest representations of the scene in a sixth-century ampulla, were interpreted in exegesis as a recognition of Christ’s inseparable humanity and divinity, and are regarded by modern theologians as ‘the most complete affirmation of Christ’s nature by anyone in the gospel’.⁹²

The story’s other teaching point lies in the laconic comment ‘Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’ (John 20:29). Similarly, the Cambridge ivory’s quotation of Christ’s command to ‘see’ his wounds, the proof of the resurrection, is paradoxically addressed to those who cannot physically see them; they are thus invited to join the blessed who attain insight through blind faith. St Augustine read St John’s use of sight in the story of Thomas as a means of referring to all the senses, the conversion of the whole understanding, and the primacy of sight is often used in this way in homiletic literature, notably the work of Ælfric.⁹³ Understanding of the metaphor of sight would have been conditioned, in ways which cannot be measured, by exegetical and liturgical encounters with other examples of its use. The most obvious example is the story of the blind man who ‘saw’ Christ, and the sighted Pharisees who, through spiritual blindness, failed to recognise his identity (John 9). It was represented in Early Christian and in early medieval art not primarily as a miracle of healing but as a manifestation and recognition of Christ’s glory. Because of the perceived relationship between blindness and sin, healing and repentance, the story had an important role in the Lenten readings and the preparation of catechumens and a continuing post-baptismal application as an image of inner conversion.

The evangelist’s verbal play on ‘seeing’ is ingeniously exploited in one of the controversial miniatures with archaic features, and possibly of Insular association, inserted in the Codex Purpureus in Munich.⁹⁴ Doubting Thomas is seated alone outside the room with shut doors in which the remaining ten disciples have received Christ’s resurrection appearance. Christ is also shown outside the room, but unseen by Thomas. The ten disciples point beyond the room to the risen **[100]** Christ, whom they can still see, as it were, in their mind’s eye, and some of them turn to urge Thomas to share their vision: ‘We have seen the Lord’. Doubting Thomas resolutely points to his own eyes, however, in eloquent dumb-show: ‘Except I shall see [. . .] I will not believe’ (John 20:25). The following scene shows Christ appearing directly to Thomas, his side wound exposed. Instead of

92 A. Grabar, *Les ampoules de Terre Sainte*, pl 15. R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, R. Murphy (ed), *The Jerome biblical commentary* (Englewood Cliffs 1968) 464.

93 For the theme of the five senses and the primacy of sight in the Gregorian exegetical tradition inherited by Ælfric, and for the appearance of the theme on the ninth-century Anglo-Saxon Fuller Brooch, see R. Bruce-Mitford, ‘Late Anglo-Saxon disc brooches’, R. Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon archaeology* (London 1974) 321–25.

94 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibl. Clm. 23 6 31, fol. 197r, A. Boinet, *La miniature carolingienne: ses origines, son développement* (Paris 1913) pl 2.



Plate 1.3 The Book of Kells. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS A.I.6 (58), fol. 124r.

the usual gesture of probing Christ's side, Thomas again indicates his own eyes as he recognises and acclaims Christ's identity through 'seeing' the wound. The entire sequence is arranged within the framework of a cross, attended in its quadrants by the four Beasts who eternally attend the divine throne in the apocalyptic vision of Christ's glory (Revelation 4:6–9). Thomas's (and the viewer's) perception of the cross is transformed on seeing the proof of the resurrection.

Some early representations of the story, such as the fifth-century ivory box now in the British Museum and the sixth-century nave mosaic at San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, show hieratic images of Christ raising his arm to reveal his wound through a slit in his garment on his left side. The sixth-century Palestinian ampulla at Monza, however, shows the slit on his right side and, with a few exceptions, this was to become customary. In Carolingian and Ottonian art Christ could be shown reaching across his body with his left hand to open the slit in the right side of his garment. An alternative to this rather cumbersome gesture appeared in the Carolingian Drogo Sacramentary fol. 66 and was to be adopted in some Ottonian examples and in two late Anglo-Saxon representations of the scene. In the Winchester Benedictional of St Æthelwold fol. 56v, closely followed in the Tiberius Psalter fol. 14v, Christ's right hand is raised, palm outwards, in a striking iconic image.⁹⁵ Christ's entire right shoulder, arm and upper right side are bared and this detail offers a closer parallel to the figure of Christ on the Cambridge ivory than the Æthelstan Psalter's enthroned image on fol. 21r (which, like the Winchester Psalter, shows a fold of cloak hanging over Christ's right shoulder). The Benedictional's version of the appearance to Thomas, where the risen Christ stands, unusually, within a mandorla, is presented as one of a series of theophanies: on fol. 64v Christ is shown similarly standing within a mandorla at his Ascension and bearing the cross-standard, very much as he does at the Second Coming on fol. 9v with the instruments of the passion.

The apparent discrepancy between text and image on the Cambridge ivory has never been noted or explored. Although St John's unique accounts of the piercing of Christ's side and of the post-resurrection revelation of that wound were well reflected in Anglo-Saxon art, the image of Christ exposing his wounded side on the ivory is combined not with the Johannine text but with Luke 24:39, which omits all mention of the side wound and draws attention only to the wounded hands and feet. A clue to the solution of the problem is contained in the development of the iconography of the Incredulity of St Thomas. In John 20:19 the risen Christ appears to the disciples late on Easter Day in the absence of Thomas and shows them his wounded hands and side. His greeting, *Pax vobis*, is repeated in v.26 when he appears, eight days later, to all eleven disciples and commands [101] doubting Thomas to see and touch his hands and side. The story was often pictured in two scenes, the first showing Christ's salutation with one hand raised in benediction or both hands raised in a

95 E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, pl 86; F. Wormald, 'An eleventh century psalter', *Walpole Society* 38 (1962) 1–13, reprinted in J.J.G. Alexander, T.J. Brown, J. Gibbs (ed), *Francis Wormald: collected writings i* (Oxford 1984) pl 140.

cruciform gesture of oblation, the second scene showing Thomas probing Christ's side wound. The two scenes could be juxtaposed horizontally, or vertically, as in the twelfth-century Exultet Roll from Troia in southern Italy.⁹⁶ Placed in the register immediately above the revelation of the side wound to Thomas is Christ's initial appearance to the *ten* disciples clearly implied in John's text; however, they not only see and touch his wounded hands, but two of them stoop low to touch and behold his wounded feet. These two stages had already been merged in a single image in early twelfth-century English art in the St Albans Psalter. In the midst of all eleven disciples Christ raises both hands in a priestly gesture (as on the Cambridge ivory) while Thomas probes his wounded side. The nail prints in Christ's hands *and* feet are clear. However, the wounded feet are not mentioned in the Johannine text at all but only at the end of St Luke's Emmaus narrative when Christ appears to the assembled disciples with the command: 'Behold my hands and feet [. . .]'. Combining the references to the wounded hands and side in the Thomas story (John 20:27) and to the wounded hands and feet in Luke 24:39, the St Albans Psalter and related manuscripts show, as no single biblical text does, all five wounds of Christ.⁹⁷

It has long been realised that the extended Emmaus sequence in the St Albans Psalter and the English manuscripts related to it is connected with the liturgical drama based on the Lucan narrative. English texts have not survived, but continental examples of the Peregrinus play show that the story of Doubting Thomas was commonly added to the end of the Emmaus story and that Luke's account of Christ saying *Videte manus meas et pedes meos* was identified with John's account of Christ's first appearance to the disciples in Thomas's absence, when he shows them his hands and side. In the Peregrinus plays, this conflated scene is often followed by a second appearance of Christ, this time in the presence of Thomas, who is exhorted to see Christ's hands and side. At least one text, however, a Norman Peregrinus current in twelfth-century Sicily, has Christ saying to Thomas: *O Thomae, infer digitum tuum huc et vide manus meas et pedes meos, et affer manuum tuam et mitte in latus meum*, thus inserting the words *et pedes meos* into an otherwise direct quotation of John 20:27.⁹⁸ Moreover, the specific cross-referencing underlying these twelfth-century examples can be shown to have been long familiar, and available to Insular monastic circles. The identical salutation *Pax vobis* in John 20:19, 26 and in Luke 24:36, and the verbal similarity of Christ's injunction to Thomas, *Vide manus meas* (John 20:27) and to the disciples, *Videte manus meas et pedes meos* (Luke 24:39), had prompted the standard patristic harmonisation of the two resurrection accounts, repeated by early medieval exegetes,

96 Troia, Cathedral Archives; M. Avery, *The Exultet rolls of S. Italy* (Princeton 1936) pl 172.

97 O. Pächt, C.R. Dodwell, F. Wormald (ed), *The St Albans Psalter*, 94, pl 32. Cf. Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 120, fol. 4v and Victoria and Albert Museum 661, verso; C.M. Kauffmann, *Romanesque MSS*, pl 99, 180.

98 K. Young, *The drama of the medieval church* i (Oxford 1933) 480, noted by O. Pächt et al., *St Albans Psalter*, 78.

including Bede, both in his homily on Luke 24 and in his commentary on Luke's gospel. Bede's gospel commentary expands Luke 24:40: *Et cum hoc dixisset ostendit eis manus et pedes* by explicitly combining it with John 20: *Non solum manus meas et pedes quibus indita clavorum clavere vestigia sed attestante lohanne etiam latus quod lance foratum fuerat ostendit* [. . .]⁹⁹ [102] Nor was this cross-referencing and conflation confined to scriptural exegesis; it appears in the early vernacular Clermont-Ferrand *La passion du Christ*:

'Pax vobis sit', dis a trestoz;
'eu soi Jhesus qui passus soi:
vedez mas mans, vedez moz peds,
vedez mo laz, qu'i fui plagaz'.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, Christ exhibiting all five wounds to Thomas had already appeared within a single image in German art in the early eleventh century, notably in the Echternach Codex Aureus c. 1040, whose iconography was influential for twelfth-century English works such as Cambridge Pemb. Coll. 120.¹⁰¹ What perhaps has not been previously noted is that well before the St Albans Psalter and the Pembroke manuscript, the image of Christ showing all five wounds to Thomas had appeared in pre-Conquest English art in the Tiberius Psalter fol. 14v. It is possible this is one of the many features of earlier origin preserved in the psalter.

V. The five wounds

While the Cambridge ivory's combination of the Lucan text 'Videte manus meas et pedes meos' with an image of the risen Christ exhibiting his side wound (and very probably all five wounds originally) looks far less idiosyncratic in the light of this long and widespread tradition, the ivory patently does not depict the Incredulity of St Thomas. It is necessary to show more precisely the relevance of the tradition to the ivory. The image of Christ's five wounds, ultimately based on the harmonisation of the Lucan and Johannine resurrection accounts, was not confined to the exegesis and pictorial representation of those particular narratives, but appeared in an eschatological context. This can be demonstrated from patristic and Insular sources. The pseudo-Augustinian sermon already cited, which conflates the Second Coming and the Last Judgement of Matthew 25, prophesies the coming of Christ, bearing his cross and showing his wounds, in fulfilment of Scripture. It quotes John 19:37,

99 D. Hurst (ed), *Opera homiletica*, CCSL 122 (1958) 241; D. Hurst (ed), *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, CCSL 120 (1960) 417.

100 Ed. Gaston Paris, *Romania* 2 (1873) 299.

101 P. Metz, *Das goldene Evangelienbuch von Echternach in germanischen National-Museum zu Nurnberg* (Munich 1956) fol. 85; also gospel book in Salzburg, Bibl. des Stifts-St Peter, Cod. a.x.6, fol. 24, G. Swarzenski, *Die Salzburger Malerei* (Stuttgart 1969) pl 19, fig 63.

‘Then will they look on him whom they have pierced’. Christ reveals his identity in words taken from the Johannine and Lucan resurrection narratives: ‘For just as he did with Thomas when he wished to correct the disciple’s disbelief and error for the faith of many – he brought the signs of the nails and the wounds themselves to show him – and said, “Put in your hand and see [John 20:27]; for a spirit does not have bones and flesh, as you see I have” [Luke 24:39]; so at that time he will show his wounds and reveal the cross to demonstrate that it is he himself who was crucified’.¹⁰² In his Eastertide homily on Luke 24, Bede not only relates the Lucan text *Videte manus meas et pedes meos* to the exposition of Christ’s side to Thomas, but goes on to cite the other key text from John concerning the side wound: *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt*.¹⁰³ Further, in his gospel commentary, Bede not only conflates Luke 24:40 [103] (*Et cum dixisset ostendit eis manus et pedes*) with the revelation of the side wound to Thomas, but goes on to elaborate John’s crucifixion prophecy by saying that Christ will return at the end of time showing his wounds to prove he is the Crucified and to confound those who lack faith. Bede specifically says this is to fulfil scripture, and quotes from Revelation 1:7.¹⁰⁴ This exegetical tradition is important in understanding the text and image on the Cambridge ivory and its range of temporal reference. The Lucan resurrection exposition of the wounds, *Videte manus meas et pedes meos*, could itself be treated as a fulfilment of the crucifixion prophecy *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt* and as an eschatological image.

Caesarius of Aries, in a sermon which has been shown to have been influential on Anglo-Saxon eschatological literature, particularly *Christ III*, draws on Matthew 25 to describe Christ sitting on the throne of majesty to deliver his reproaches to sinners. The review of his sufferings includes an exposition of the wounds: ‘See, here are the marks left by the nails which fixed me as I hanged; look, here are the wounds in my side’.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in *Christ III*, Christ delivers from the throne an emotive recapitulation of the sufferings of the passion and displays the wounds, as in the resurrection appearances separately described in Luke 24 and John 20:

Behold the prints where they pierced my hands,
My feet likewise, whereby made fast
I hung on the cross. Still in my side
Plain to see is the bloody scar.¹⁰⁶

102 M.J.B. Allen and D.G. Calder, *Sources and analogues of Old English poetry*, 98.

103 op. cit., *CCSL* 122, 241–42: the elect will see the signs of the passion in God; at the Judgement (the signs) will be shown even to the damned, according to the scripture, ‘They shall look on him whom they pierced’.

104 *CCSL* 120, 417–19.

105 Sermon 57, Morin (ed), *CCSL* 103, 252–54; Allen and Calder, *Sources and analogues of Old English poetry*, 104–105.

106 Cook, *The Christ of Cynewulf* lines 1455–59, translated C.W. Kennedy, *Early English poetry* (Oxford 1952) 283.

In its depiction of the enthroned Christ displaying the wounds with the resurrection injunction to behold those wounds, the Cambridge ivory's combination of text and image is evidently drawing on an ancient *topos* which had entered vernacular poetry. The viewer's familiarity with the mental image, whether or not it had previously been shown pictorially, could be assumed. This is not the same as saying that the ivory represents the Last Judgement. It adopts and exploits the associations of a familiar visualisation of that culminating event of historical time, but also uses it to depict the revelation of Christ's eternal glory, which is outside time, and its implications for the present: judgement is now.

One of the chief functions of an eschatological image is to make a christological statement. It will have become apparent that the entire cluster of texts concerned with Christ's wounds have in common verbs of looking and seeing which can be read as meaning spiritual insight, and that they are used to assert the continuing inseparable humanity and divinity of Christ, crucified and glorified. Text and image on the Cambridge ivory together exploit this familiar exegetical chain and the metaphor of sight to compel the viewer to behold Christ's wounds now and, in so doing, recognise his true identity. The technique echoes that of the liturgy. A large number of the antiphons listed for use between the octave of Easter and the Ascension excerpt precisely the phrase or sentence [104] from the various gospel resurrection accounts which use words of seeing or recognition, including *Videte manus meas et pedes meas quia ego ipse sum*, which also forms the vespers antiphon on Easter Tuesday and is included in the antiphon and gospel reading at matins and at mass. Citing it as the antiphon *ad completorium* on that day, the Leofric Collectar could intelligibly refer to it in an even more cryptic form than appears on the Cambridge ivory: *Videte manus meas*.¹⁰⁷ The resurrection narrative from which this antiphon is taken itself uses sight as an expression of spiritual enlightenment. On their way to Emmaus, the two disciples failed to recognise the risen Christ, *oculi autem illorum tenebantur ne eum agnoscerent* (24:16). They came to 'see' him in the exposition of the scriptures, the breaking of bread and the interior experience of his presence: *Et aperti sunt oculi eorum, et cognoverunt eum: et ipse evanuit ex oculis eorum*. After their enlightenment and return to Jerusalem, Christ then appeared to all the disciples with the command, *Videte manus meas et pedes meas*, as a graphic and highly abbreviated summary of the whole process whereby he was revealed to them as the prophesied Messiah, the incarnate and suffering Redeemer and the risen Lord (Luke 24:39–46). The Eastertide liturgical use of this text commemorates Christ's command to his disciples, *Videte*, but also directs it anew to his present followers and anticipates his appearance at the Second Coming, expected to occur at the Easter season. The text from which the antiphon is taken had further theological reverberations as an important proof text in the exposition of the hypostatic union

107 London, British Library, Harley 2961, ed. E.S. Dewick, *Henry Bradshaw Society* 45 (1914) i, cols 140, 154, 155. 'Videte manus meas et pedes meos' is the antiphon said 'Ad Crucem' for the three days after Easter in the late tenth-century antiphonary of Hartker, R. Hesbert (ed), *Corpus antiphonalium officii*, ii 332–26 and iii 536 for FERIA III Paschae.

and in affirming Christ's humanity and the reality of his bodily sufferings: 'Behold my hands and feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and blood as ye see me have'.¹⁰⁸

The text on the Cambridge ivory is part of an extensive exegetical chain ranging in time from Old Testament prophecy to the crucifixion and resurrection, the Second Coming and the Day of Judgement, with constant reference to the present. One of the characteristics of such chains is that they are not rigid structures with a single meaning and temporal reference, but are flexible and readily linked with other chains to produce a variety of allusion, depending on the context in which they are used. Their strength lies in providing multiple, if often enigmatic, affirmations of the testimony of scripture, conceived as a totality but read at different levels of application and apprehension. Because of its frequent association with the account in John 20:27 of Christ's revelation of his wounded side to Thomas, Luke 24:39 was readily affiliated to the exegetical chain of texts concerning Christ being pierced (Zacharias 12:10; John 19:37; Revelation 1:7). Because Christ displayed his wounded hands as well as his side to Thomas, and because this was linked with the Lucan story of his displaying his hands and feet, texts from the central chain could allude not only to Christ's pierced side, but also to the image of all five wounds.

Verbal similarity with another Old Testament prophetic text, Psalms 21:17, further secured the place of Luke 24:39 as a link in this extended chain. A few illustrated texts and inscribed images may provide an insight into the practical operation of the imaginative process involved in using such a chain. Examples concentrate on [105] the phrase *manus meas et pedes meos* and its role in iconography not solely or primarily concerned with the Last Judgement.

The familiarity of the psalter to a monastic audience scarcely needs stressing. The *Regularis Concordia* reveals the growth by the late tenth century of psalmody and offices, including the recitation of the entire psalter on each of the three last days in Holy Week, in addition to the weekly recitation required by the Rule of St Benedict.¹⁰⁹ Psalms 21 would have been especially familiar from its extensive use in the liturgy of Holy Week, on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and notably in the Night Office on Good Friday. It was already treated as a prophecy of the crucifixion in the synoptic and Johannine gospel passion narratives, and exegesis developed further parallels. St Augustine observed, 'The whole psalm is spoken in the person of our crucified Lord'; 'Christ's passion is set forth as

108 For example, the *Tome* of Leo the Great quotes the Lucan passage (adding the Johannine reference to the side wound) in defending belief in Christ's two natures in one Person, and elaborates the metaphor of seeing: blindness to the true nature of Christ's body involves denial of his bodily sufferings: E.R. Hardy (ed), *The christology of the later Fathers* (London 1954) 367–68.

109 T. Symons (ed), *The Regularis Concordia*, xliii–xliv for Horarium and 34–52 for Holy Week and Easter observances; J.R. Hall, 'Some liturgical notes on Ælfric's letter to the monks at Eynsham', *Downside Revelation* 93 (1975) 297–303; M. McC. Gatch, 'The office in late Anglo-Saxon monasticism', M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (ed), *Learning and literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, 341–62.

clearly here as in the Gospel'. Verse 17 (*Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos*) was interpreted as referring to the nailing of Christ's hands and feet to the cross, which is nowhere described in the gospel accounts of the crucifixion but is to be inferred from Luke's account of the risen Christ saying (possibly alluding to Psalms 21:17), *Videte manus meas et pedes meos*, and from St John's account of doubting Thomas saying, *Nisi videro in manibus ejus fixuram clavorum* [. . .] (John 20:25). In his influential commentary on the Psalms, Augustine said of the line *Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos*: 'Then were those wounds made, the scars of which were handled by that doubting disciple who said, "Unless I put my fingers into the scars of his wounds I will not believe"'.¹¹⁰ This exegetical linking of the wounded hands and feet with the wound in Christ's side is also made in pictorial representations. *Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos* is inscribed above the crucifixion in an Ottonian lectionary c. 1035; like the illustration of Psalms 21 in the late Anglo-Saxon Bury Psalter, only the wounds in Christ's hands and feet are shown, but the wound in the side may be implied through the presence of a chalice at the foot of the cross.¹¹¹ In the Carolingian Utrecht Psalter, copied in the Anglo-Saxon Harley Psalter c. 1000–1020, *foderunt manus meas et pedes meos* is literally illustrated with a scene of men digging with pickaxes, juxtaposed to the instruments of the passion, including the lance, displayed against the cross.¹¹²

By the twelfth century, the exegetical cross-referencing of texts underlying particular images was frequently made explicit in inscriptions which were incorporated as part of the formal design. The often highly abbreviated extract from a text presupposes an audience capable of completing the quotation and for whom the liturgical circumstances in which that quotation was chiefly familiar would itself act as an important key in the interpretation of the inscribed image as a whole. Just two examples of this type may demonstrate the continuing association of *manus meas et pedes meos* with the side wound in contexts other than the Incredulity of Thomas or the Last Judgement. The customary scene of the crucifixion illustrating the opening of the canon of the mass in sacramentaries and missals appears, with expository embellishments, in a sacramentary from Helmarshausen, c. 1170. Representatives of the three categories of Old [106] Testament writing brandish speech scrolls to show their prophecies fulfilled in Christ.¹¹³ King David, the presumed author of the Psalms, holds a scroll inscribed with Psalms 21:17, *foderunt manus meas et pedes meos*, yet is set above a crucifixion

110 *Enarrationes in psalmos*, CCSL 38, 127.

111 Brussels, Bibl. Royale, lat. ms. 9428, fol. 87 and Vatican, Regina lat. 12, fol. 35. See J. Rosenthal, *The historiated canon tables of the Arenberg Gospels*, 95–100 for speculation on the theological significance of the Crucifixion iconography showing Christ with a chalice at the foot of the cross, accompanied by angels, which almost invariably omits the side wound.

112 London, British Library, Harley 603, fol. 12; E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, pl 201.

113 Munster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum. *Ornamenta ecclesiae: Kunst und Künstler der Romanik*, Katalog zur Ausstellung des Schnutgen-Museums i (Cologne 1985) cat. B.15, 165. I am grateful to Professor Próinséas Ni Chatháin for drawing this catalogue to my attention.

scene which shows not only the wounded hands and feet but also Christ's bleeding side. The eucharistic context of the sacramentary's image reinforces the exegetical connection here. David's companion figure holds the prophecy of Zacharias recalled by St John at the piercing of Christ's side, *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt*. Two contemporary monks at the foot of the cross gaze upwards to 'look on him whom they pierced'. In the previous verse of his crucifixion narrative St John explains that the decision to spear Christ's side rather than break his legs fulfilled another Messianic prophecy 'a bone of him shall not be broken'. John is here quoting Exodus 12:46 and the description of the killing of the Passover lamb, regarded as a type of Christ's sacrifice (1 Corinthians 5:7), and John's chronology of the passion presents the crucifixion as coinciding with the ritual slaughter of the lambs for the Passover feast. These three texts are part of an exegetical chain concerning the sacrificial and sacramental implications of the piercing of Christ's side and its liturgical acclamation, *Ecce Agnus Dei*. The Helmarshausen crucifixion miniature is completed by the prophet Isaiah holding a text from this chain, his own Messianic prophecy, 'He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter' (53:7), and St Peter showing the fulfilment of this prophecy in the crucifixion (1 Peter 2:21–22). Two allusive collections of texts thus converge on the image of Christ's wounded side.

On the second twelfth-century example, the Bury St Edmunds ivory cross, now in the Cloisters Museum, New York, the crucifixion is expounded by an infinitely more complex series of texts; some from the group under discussion may be isolated, their allusions to other texts left undiscussed.¹¹⁴ On the reverse of the cross the figure of David, again holding a scroll inscribed *Foderunt manus meas et pedes meas*, is placed immediately beneath the symbol of the evangelist John, bearing the text *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt*. As in the Helmarshausen example, therefore, the references to Christ's wounded hands and feet (Psalms 21:17) and to his pierced side (John 19:37) are directly related. In the context of monastic *lectio divina* such a link was probably reinforced by the fact that the very next verse in the passion psalm, *Ipsi vero aspiciunt et videntes me*, would call to mind other texts in the chain, notably Zacharias 12:10 and Revelation 1:7. Zacharias' prophecy was itself placed in a small panel on the face of the ivory cross, next to the large figure of Christ crucified (now missing). Knowledge of the opening words *Et aspicient ad me confixerunt* from the familiar text is assumed, and only the words immediately following are inscribed on the scroll held by Zacharias among the figures gazing intently on the wounded body of Christ at the Deposition and lamenting his shrouded body below: *et plangent eum planctu quasi super unigenitum* (Zacharias 12:10). This motif of weeping, here applied to the mourning disciples at the Deposition, could also allude to the fulfilment of Zacharias' prophecy in the apocalyptic vision from Revelation 1:7, *Et videbit eum*

114 Dated second quarter of the twelfth century, P. Lasko in G. Zarnecki, J. Holt and T. Holland (ed), *English Romanesque art 1066–1200*, cat. 206.

omnis oculus, et qui eum pupugerunt. Et plangent se super eum omnes tribus terrae. St John the [107] evangelist and presumed author of the Apocalypse, stands weeping beside an image of Christ with pierced side in the central medallion on the reverse of the ivory cross. The image used is not of the crucified or enthroned Christ, however, but the apocalyptic 'Lamb that was slain' (Revelation 5:6, 12), shown with a lance piercing its side. It is accompanied by an inscribed text from the Messianic prophecy *Et ego quasi agnus mansuetus, qui portatur ad victimam* (Jer 11:19). The familiar chain of texts alluding to Christ's wounds is thus rather startlingly linked with the chain of texts which see Christ as the sacrificial *Agnus Dei*. The link, originally made in St John's gospel statement that the piercing of Christ's side fulfilled two prophecies (Exodus 12:46 and Zacharias 12:10) is also explicitly stated on the ivory cross shaft above the central medallion of the pierced Lamb, for the scroll held by St John's symbol is inscribed, not only with *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt*, but also with *Os non comminuētis ex eo* (John 19:37, 36). This is material for *ruminatio*. It presupposes a monastic audience familiar with the techniques of free verbal association, poetic juxtapositions, multiple allusion and the telescoping of time so readily used in liturgy and exegesis. 'We are dealing with an esoteric and allusive art, the product of the narrowly learned monastic culture of the period'.¹¹⁵ The inscriptions of the Bury St Edmunds cross, like that on the Cambridge ivory, are enigmatic, even gnomic, their implied associations paradoxical. To the uninitiated, such texts do not unlock the mystery of the cross they accompany or whose surface they cover.

VI. Lamentations

The historian cannot say exactly what was originally 'meant' or intended by an inscribed image, but can only point to the probable limits of its contemporary associations. Which particular range of allusions has prominence in any multi-faceted image or allusive text must depend on a wide variety of factors such as the precise context and audience in which the object appeared and the function it served, much of which is irrecoverable. It has been suggested here that as a liturgical antiphon, a key christological text and as part of an extended exegetical chain, the Cambridge ivory's inscription would have been resonant and, combined with its image, highly allusive for a monastic audience. On the Gunhild ivory cross (Figure 1.4) the text from Luke 24:39, *Videte manus meas et pedes meos dicit dominus*, is similarly carved around an image of Christ enthroned and exhibiting his five wounds, yet here the field of probable allusion seems more circumscribed by the unambiguous presentation of the wounded Christ as Judge. The separation of the Blessed and the Damned is

115 George Henderson, citing the Ruthwell Cross and the Bury St Edmunds Cross as examples of the 'encyclopaedic role' of the cross in early medieval art: 'It is regarded as growing more potent, the more expository material is added to it', *Early medieval* (Harmondsworth 1972) 225.

a literal illustration of the accompanying texts from Matthew 25:34 inscribed on the cross shaft. Combined with the scenes of Dives and Lazarus enacting their accompanying inscription from Luke 16:24–25, they form an unmysterious didactic programme based on the description of the Last Judgement in Matthew 25: *Discedite a me maledicti in ignem aeternum . . . esurivi enim, et non dedistis mihi manducare* [. . .]. These reproaches of Christ at the Judgement were combined with the image of his displaying his wounds in [108] patristic and Anglo-Saxon eschatological literature, and drew on a long tradition of conflating the two resurrection references to the wounds, as has been seen. In the context of the Gunhild Cross, the chief function of the inscription *Videte manus meas et pedes meos* is to adjure the royal owner of the ivory cross to see now in the suffering Christ (depicted in the bleeding crucified figure originally shown on the face of the Gunhild Cross) the one who will also be the dread Judge. Its practical advice to princes is to avoid the fate of Dives and the damned by seeing and serving Christ in the needy.

The Lucan text and the image of the wounded Christ on the earlier Cambridge ivory, however, carry a different emphasis, not only because they lack the Gunhild Cross's clear Last Judgement context, but because the words *Vi(det)e manus et p(edes)* are prefaced by a short text, absent from the Gunhild Cross, and so far not identified or discussed by commentators: *O vos om(ne)s*. For students of later medieval lyrics these are three evocative words, but their original liturgical context is essential in trying to recover the effect of their combination with the Lucan text on the Cambridge ivory. The ordering of the liturgical life was the chief activity of late Anglo-Saxon monasticism, the common formative experience through which the themes and techniques of scriptural exegesis were made accessible. Though doubtless apprehended at varying levels of sophistication, the very familiarity of the themes and images of passiontide and Easter made possible their creative re-statement.

The text *O vos omnes* is abbreviated from Lamentations 1:12 *O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus*. The words, said of Jerusalem by Jeremiah, were incorporated in the liturgy of Holy Week and applied to the sufferings of Christ. Three extracts from the opening chapters of Lamentations formed lections during the night office on each day of the Triduum Sanctum. In addition, the text 'O vos omnes . . .' itself was used in the third nocturn of the Night Office on Good Friday and in the second and third nocturns on Holy Saturday where it alternated with the words *Videte, omnes populi, si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus*.¹¹⁶ The lament is said as if by Christ, addressing not only those who historically crucified him but all 'qui transitis per viam'; it is implicitly an emotive appeal to the present congregation to behold his grief, including the

116 M. Andrieu (ed), *Les ordines romani du haut moyen âge*, iii 455, 492; v 260–61; PL 78, 767; R.J. Hesbert (ed), *Corpus antiphonalium officii*, i 174–76, iv 325. I am grateful to Professor J.E. Cross for discussion of the earliest surviving sources of this material.

wounds of his passion, and thus, on the Cambridge ivory, dramatically contrasts with the rest of the inscription formed by the words of Christ exhibiting the same marks of that suffering as the triumphant proof of the resurrection, *Videte manus meas et pedes meos*.

As often happens in liturgy, the occurrence of a key phrase or word, in this case *Videte*, forms the cue for the poetic linking of originally quite separate texts.

In the second nocturn on Good Friday, Christ's quotation from the cross of the opening of Psalms 21, is combined with the account of the piercing of his side: *Tunc unus ex militibus lancea latus eius perforavit*. In the third nocturn the text *O vos omnes* [. . .] *videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus*, is immediately followed by a response formed by the combination of John 19:37 and Revelation 1:7, together with the acclamation of the centurion at the crucifixion.¹¹⁷ As Psalms 21 was also said during [109] this same office on Good Friday, other elements of the exegetical chain of 'seeing' texts already discussed were also present, including v. 18, *Ipsi vero aspiciunt et videntes me* (recalling Zacharias 12:10) and v. 17, *Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos*, evoking Luke 24:39.

The full inscription on the Cambridge ivory, *O vos om(ne)s: vi(det)e manus et p(edes)*, thus conflates two texts of very different mood, sharing the command *Videte* and familiar from the liturgy of the days immediately before and after Easter. Compassionate sorrow for Christ's suffering is here juxtaposed to the revelation of his resurrection and glory. This is precisely the paradox celebrated in the liturgical commemoration of the crucifixion on Good Friday where seeing, in the sense of spiritual recognition, is constantly emphasised. The Good Friday ceremonies outlined in the customary of the late Anglo-Saxon monastic reform, the *Regularis Concordia*, are largely a meditation on texts in which Christ is progressively revealed and his identity recognised.¹¹⁸ First, he is made known in his fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, the reading from Osee 6:2, seen as an allusion to the resurrection, *In die tertia suscitabit nos* [. . .] *ut cognoscamus Dominum*, and in the tract from the Old Latin text of the Canticle of Habacuc, *In medio duorum animalium innotesceris, dum appropinquaeverint amni, cognosceris*, revealed in Christ's crucifixion between two thieves. The Good Friday reading from Exodus 12:1–11 concerning the slaying of the Passover lamb is then expressly shown to have been fulfilled at the crucifixion in the gospel reading from St John. The high point of the evangelist's account of the passion as a manifestation of Christ's glory is his description of the piercing of Christ's side, seen as a fulfilment of Exodus 12:46 and of Zacharias' Messianic prophecy; *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt* also alludes to the means by which he will ultimately be made known.

In the *Improperia*, however, which follow the solemn prayers, the anguished tone of the *O vos omnes* lamentation heard earlier in the day at matins is again taken up. In elaborate counterpoint, Christ's reproaches to his people for not

117 R.J. Hesbert (ed), *Corpus Antiphonarium Officii* IV, 458.

118 T. Symons (ed), *Regularis Concordia*, 40–46 for Good Friday ceremonies.

recognising his saving power in the Old Testament types and prophecies and for seeing only his suffering humanity at his passion, are interspersed with the recognition of his divinity in the *Sanctus* of the heavenly host. These reproaches simultaneously suggest the sorrowful lament of Christ from the cross to the Jews who crucified him and failed to recognise his identity, the stern reproaches of Christ at his Second Coming, recalling the sufferings of the passion caused by the sinful, and his appeal to the present congregation to 'behold' his wounds.

The recognition of Christ's divinity in the Trisagion is accompanied by the literal unveiling of a cross and its elevation between two deacons in front of the altar. This is in token of the heavenly exaltation of Christ himself, represented in Early Christian art and in some early medieval examples by the iconography of two angels holding or attending the cross. The Winchester Psalter's representation on fol. 35 of two angels elevating a precious metalwork cross before an altar at the feet of the enthroned and wounded Christ, suggests a reminiscence of this *Adoratio crucis* ceremony (Figure 1.8). The two deacons who normally assisted at mass [110] were widely believed to represent angels, invisibly present at the altar where the sacrifice of the cross is sacramentally renewed and Christ is made known in the eucharist; the Good Friday ceremonies of recognition concluded with the communion of the pre-sanctified elements.¹¹⁹ In his commentary on the *Adoratio crucis*, the Carolingian liturgist Amalarius of Metz quoted Jerome to stress the importance of the cross for men *and* angels, who previously did not know the sacrament.¹²⁰ The theme of men and angels joined in worshipping the exalted cross appears, appropriately, on the Carolingian altar of San Ambrogio, on the late Anglo-Saxon portable altar in the Musée de Cluny and on the Cambridge ivory, which may have formed part of a portable altar or reliquary of the cross. The theme is common in early exegesis and, as is well known, appears in the opening vision of the *Dream of the rood*.¹²¹ Amalarius's description of the ceremonial pilgrimage to the cross on Good Friday suggests a ritual enactment of the monastic inner pilgrimage *ad crucem*: penitential prostration before the exalted cross mirrors the monk's sharing of Christ's descent and humility on the cross (cf. Philippians 2:5–11). The monastic community *in via* venerates the cross, joining the heavenly host in 'seeing' its true salvific nature and acclaiming it in the antiphon: *Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pendit*.

In the three extra-liturgical prayers which follow the *Adoratio crucis* in the *Regularis Concordia*, Christ is adored 'wounded on the cross', but also hailed as 'Creator of the world, splendour of the Father's glory'. The prayers are interspersed

119 J. Rosenthal, *The historiated canon tables of the Arenberg Gospels*, 89–92, 114 and notes.

120 J.M. Hansens (ed), *Opera liturgica omnia*, iii 100.

121 B. Raw, 'The dream of the rood and its connections with Early Christian art', *Medium Aevum* 39 (1970) 242; 250–51 for the veneration of the cross by men and angels in the eleventh-century additions to the Vespasian Psalter and in the *Portiforium Wulfstani*. Ælfric's Palm Sunday homily describes the passion as salutary both to men and angels (*Homilies of Ælfric*, i 215).

with the seven penitential psalms and the intention of the first prayer, which also appears in early books of private devotions, is clear: 'I beseech thee that thy wounds may be unto the healing of my soul [. . .] I adore thee who are to come in judgement; I beseech thee at thy coming not to enter into judgement with me a sinner'.¹²² At the feasts of the Invention and of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, in which the *Adoratio crucis* is repeated, the community anticipates in a response the appearance of the cross in the heavens as the sign heralding the Second Coming and visualises Christ enthroned as Judge. The liturgy for both feasts variously combines the Holy Week hymn from Philippians 2:5–11 concerning Christ's descent and exaltation, with texts from the Johannine chain which uses *exaltatio* in describing Christ raised up to his death on the cross as the means of drawing all men to him (John 3:14–15; 12:32–33; cf. 8:28).¹²³

On the Cambridge ivory the eight small figures are drawn to the exalted cross. The vision of Christ in his inseparable humanity and divinity, bearing the wounds of the passion yet enthroned in glory with his saints, is what the faithful community below 'see' or recognise on beholding the cross. Like their patrons, the Virgin and St Peter, and like the angels, they see him as he is in eternal glory, and as he will be revealed at the Second Coming. The image of the exalted cross is a theophany. For a monastic audience the unriddling of the enigmatic exhortation inscribed around the wounded enthroned figure reveals a profound christological insight and a succinct directory to the spiritual life: *O vos omnes, videte manus meas et pedes meas.* [111]

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122 *Regularis Concordia* 43, also found in the Book of Cerne and the Pontifical of Egbert, L. Gjerløw, *Adoratio crucis: the Regularis Concordia and the Decreta Lanfranci* (Oslo 1961) 16–20.

123 *Hoc signum crucis erit in caelo cum dominus ad iudicandum venerit*, R.J. Hesbert (ed), *Corpus antiphonalium officii*, i 302; for Phil 2:9–10 'Ad matutinos capitulum' on the Exaltatio Sancte Crucis, see the Wulfstan Collectar, E.S. Dewick and W.H. Frere, *Leofric Collectar compared with the Collectar of St Wulfstan* ii, Henry Bradshaw Society 56 (1921) 574.

THE HIBERNO-LATIN TRADITION OF THE EVANGELISTS AND THE GOSPELS OF MAEL BRIGTE

The colophons in London, B.L. Harley 1802, which is one of about twenty Irish manuscripts surviving from the century before the Norman invasion, indicate it was written in Armagh in 1138 by a scribe who signs himself Mael Brigte hua Mael Uanaigh.¹ The Gospels of Mael Brigte is well known for its additional texts in Irish and for an extensive interlinear and marginal Latin Gospel commentary in a tiny minuscule, mostly on Matthew's gospel.² The Gospel text was clearly laid out in order to accommodate the commentary. It used to be thought that the glosses reflected the very recent international new learning of the Paris schools and Peter Lombard but in an important pilot study of the Harley manuscript's commentary on Matthew's account of the Last Supper (26:17–30) Jean Rittmüller has shown parallels with eighth-century Hiberno-Latin compilations including the *Liber questionum in [290] evangelium*, a commentary on Matthew, which is complete in a ninth-century manuscript, Orleans, Bibl. mun. 65 (62), and the *Pauca problesmata de enigmatibus ex tomis canonicis* (the Irish Reference Bible), which are related to each other and in turn draw on seventh-century Irish exegesis.³ A similar Hiberno-Latin background may be argued for the previously unpublished

1 For a fuller discussion of the Insular iconography of the evangelist symbols and the Hiberno-Latin development of the patristic exegetical tradition, with particular reference to the examples in Angers 55, Munich Clm 6233 and Clm 6235, see J. O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular traditions on the Evangelists: exegesis and iconography', A.M. Luiselli Fadda and É. Ó Carragáin (ed), *Quaderni di Romano-Barbarica* i (1998).

2 S. O'Grady and Robin Flower, *A catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum* (2 vols, London 1926, repr. Dublin 1992), ii 428–32; Whitley Stokes, 'The Irish verses, notes and glosses in Harley 1802', *Rev Celt* 8 (1887) 346–69.

3 Jean Rittmüller, 'The gospel commentary of Mael Brigte ua Macluanaig and its Hiberno-Latin background', *Peritia* 2 (1983) 185–214. Bernard Bischoff, 'Turning-points in the history of Latin exegesis in the early Irish church: AD 650–800' in Martin McNamara (ed), *Biblical studies: the medieval Irish contribution* (Dublin 1976) 145–49. Dr Rittmüller's references to the Reference Bible are to a ninth-century manuscript, Munich, Bayerische Statsbibl. Clm 14276 + 14277. Bischoff, 'Turning-points', cat. 16 I; cat. 1. C.D. Wright, 'Hiberno-Latin and Irish-influenced biblical commentaries, florilegia and homily collections', F.M. Briggs, T.D. Hill, P.E. Szarmach (ed), *The sources of Anglo-Saxon culture: a trial version* (Binghamton NY 1990) cat. 20.

exegetical text on the four evangelists which occupies fol. 9r in Harley 1802. Before considering its content in detail, some brief account of its context within the exegetical tradition must be given.

Christian exegesis early identified the four winged living creatures who attend and acclaim the divine throne in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:4–26) and in the apocalyptic vision (Revelation 4:6–8) as figures of the four evangelists. The Old and New Testament theophanies were read as demonstrations of the divine authority underlying the testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as the individual but entirely harmonious facets of a single fourfold Gospel in which Christ is revealed. This central exegetical precept was further demonstrated in the allegorical interpretation of two more scriptural images: the four rivers of paradise issuing from a single fountain of life, yet flowing out to water the four corners of the earth (Genesis 2: 10–14) and the Ark of the Covenant, signifying the divine presence, brought throughout the world by means of its four carrying-rings (Exodus 25:10–14). The concept of gospel harmony concealed beneath the literal text of these scriptural images was given highly influential expression in the introduction to Jerome's commentary on Matthew's gospel. Known by its opening words 'Plures fuisse', the first part of the introduction came to serve as a standard preliminary text in early gospel books and survives in a number of Insular examples.⁴ Gregory the Great's homilies on Ezekiel confirmed Jerome's pairing of the evangelists and the four living creatures and showed how each gospel, as epitomised by its opening lines and characterised by its symbolic beast, reveals a particular aspect of Christ related to the four stages of human redemption and facets of the spiritual [291] life.⁵

From as early as Irenaeus, however, a second line of argument influenced by biblical Wisdom literature and Platonic philosophy had been used in defending and expounding the fourfold nature of the Gospel. The Old Testament opens with the affirmation of God as maker of heaven and earth and shows creation to be revelatory of the nature of divine wisdom (e.g. Psalms 108:24). The Creator is repeatedly imagined imposing cosmic order and harmony with compasses, rule and scales in hand (Job 28:25, Proverbs 8:27, Isaiah 40:12); the key text from Wisdom 11:2, 'You have ordered all things in measure and number and weight' was particularly cited in patristic exegesis of the Genesis account of creation. The numerical proportions and ordered geometry of creation thus itself became an expression of the divine Wisdom. Augustine applied this exegetical tradition directly to Christ in his influential tractates on John's gospel. In language echoing Genesis I: I the Logos is revealed as the divine Creator in John 1:1–2. Commenting on verse 3, *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*, Augustine used Wisdom 11:21 to show how all things were made by the Creator-Logos: *omnia in mensura et numero*

4 Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, CCSL 77 (Turnholt 1969) 1–4; *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem*, CCSL 75 (Turnholt 1964) 10–16. Patrick McGurk, *Latin gospel books from AD 400–800* (Paris-Brussels 1961) 110–11.

5 M. Adraen (ed), *S. Gregorii Magni Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, CCSL 142 (Turnholt 1971), hom. iv 47.

et pondere.⁶ Patristic perceptions of this divine measure and number were also formed by cosmological concepts of the ancient world in which space, time and matter were seen as part of a harmonious ordering. Exegesis on the harmony of the four gospels, such as Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures, cited not only other scriptural images of the divine authority underlying the number four but also the evidence of a quadripartite creation. The four winds or cardinal directions, the four seasons of the year, the four elements and their properties and sometimes the four humours of the human microcosm and four cardinal virtues of the moral life were related to the four evangelists and illuminated the nature of the fourfold Gospel's revelation of Christ the Creator-Logos.

In appropriating the patristic tradition on the four evangelists, Hiberno-Latin commentators also extended it. To the examples first discussed by Robert McNally (namely the introduction to the Ps-Jerome's *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum*, Ps-Isidore's *Liber de numeris*, the Ps-Bedan *Collectanea* [292] and the Irish Reference Bible)⁷ may be added others, ranging from the short late eighth-century manuals preserved in Angers 55 and Munich Clm 6235 to the introductions to the major commentaries on Matthew's gospel preserved in Orleans 65 (62) and Munich Clm 6233.⁸ Characteristically these works quote from or paraphrase Jerome's 'Plures fuisse' text and its scripturally-based expositions of the four gospels, sometimes very closely as in the introduction to the gospels in the Reference Bible (Paris, BN lat 1156 I, fol. 125v–36v). When dealing with the cosmological parallels to gospel harmony, however, the Hiberno-Latin commentators developed their own distinctive voice.

The techniques of numerology, etymology, rhetorical questions, and scriptural and apocryphal allusions could simultaneously expound and veil the testimony of the cosmic quaternities. Sometimes the simple enumeration of the quaternities, without any explanation, seems to have functioned as a proof of the authority of the fourfold gospel revelation, prompting the perception of yet other sets of fours. A recurring feature is the application of the apocryphal theme of the cosmic tetragrammaton of Adam's name (used by Augustine and Bede in a variety of other exegetical contexts) to the specific association of the four evangelists with

6 F. Saguard (ed), *Irenaeus, Adversus haereses*, SC 34 (Paris 1952) 3.8.11; 4.20.10–11. H. Bober, 'In principio: creation before time', M. Meiss (ed), *De artibus opuscula XL: essays in honour of Erwin Panofsky* (New York 1961) 13–28, for patristic uses of Platonic cosmology in exegesis on creation. C. Butler, *Number symbolism* (London 1970) 24–25. R. Willems (ed), *Augustine, In Johannis evangelium*, CCL 36 (1954), *Tractatus* 1, 13. For the later philosophical development of these concepts see James McEvoy, 'Biblical and Platonic measure in John Scottus Eriugena', B. McGinn and W. Otten (ed), *Eriugena* (Notre Dame IN and London 1994) 153–77.

7 Robert McNally, 'The evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition', A. Hiergemann (ed), *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff* (Stuttgart 1971) 111–22.

8 Angers 55, fols. 1r–12v, *Incipiunt quaestiones uel glosae in euangelio nomine*; Munich Clm 6235 ff 32v–33v, *Incipit pauca de libris Catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta*, R. McNally (ed), *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* 1, CCL 108 B (Turnholt 1973) 133–49, 213–19. Orleans 65 (62) is being edited by Jean Rittmueller and Munich Clm 6233 by Denis Brearley.

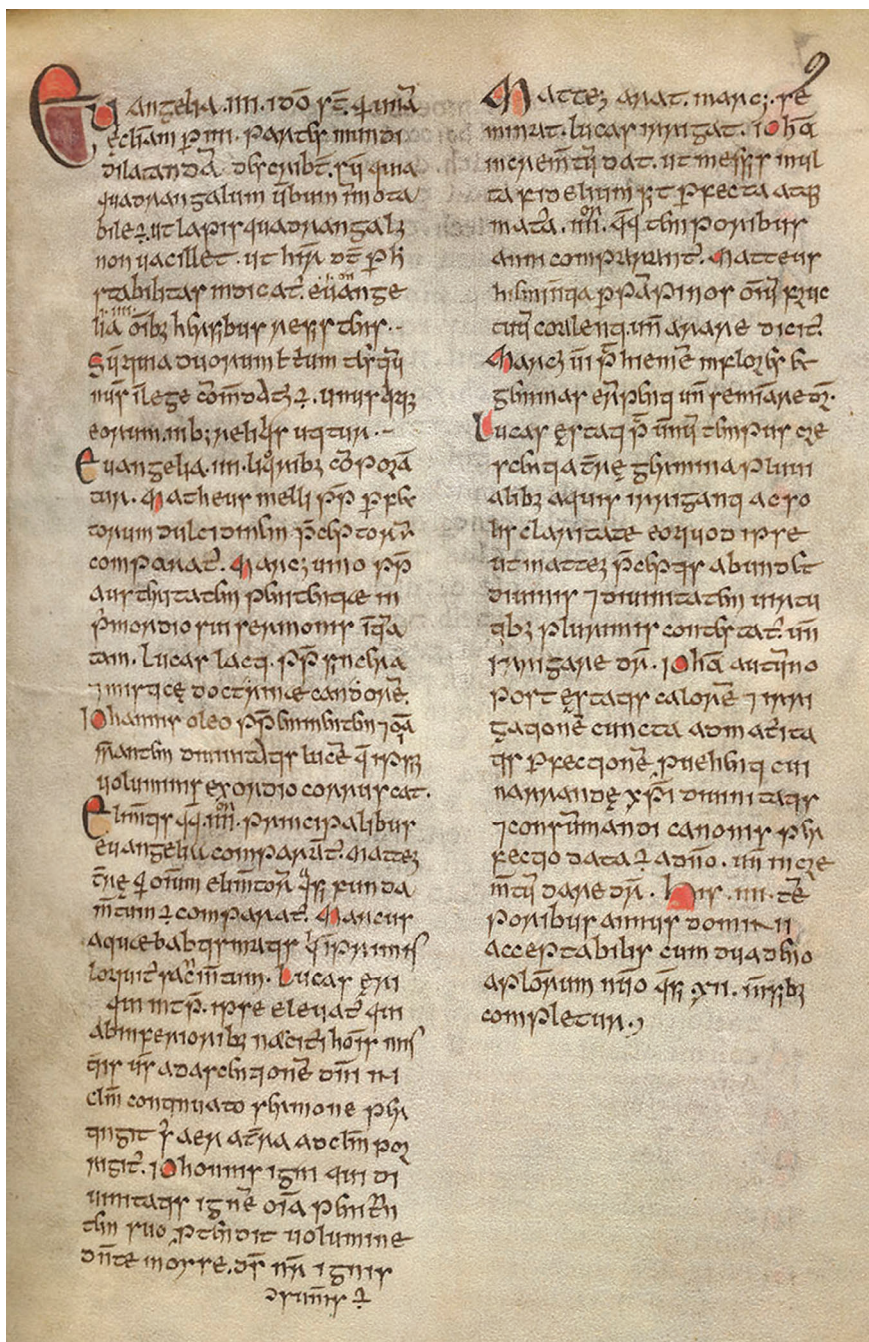
the four cosmic directions and elements and sometimes to the composition of the human body.⁹ In particular the Hiberno-Latin identification of the four evangelists not only with the conventional scriptural image of the four rivers of Eden but with the apocryphal quaternity of the paradisaal liquids (milk and honey, oil and wine) is, as McNally noted, not at all well-founded in patristic tradition. In the Ps-Jerome and the *Liber de numeris* the evangelists and the liquids are paired in the order *Matheus mel, Marcus lac, Lucas oleum, Johannes vinum*; in the Ps-Bedan *Collectanea* wine and oil are assigned to Luke and John respectively and the Reference Bible has a different order again: Matthew–honey, Mark–wine, Luke–milk, John–oil.¹⁰ The Latin version of the apocryphal *Visio Pauli* [293] directly connects the paradisaal rivers of Eden and the four liquids but does not mention the evangelists. The river of honey is called Phison, the river of milk is the Euphrates, the river of oil is the Gihon and the river of wine is the Tigris. The liquids are also depicted as the contents of the four paradisaal rivers in later Irish vernacular works alongside other apocryphal material such as the tetragrammaton of Adam's name.¹¹ In the four Hiberno-Latin examples noted here either the order of the pairing of rivers and liquids differs from that in the *Visio Pauli* or they are not directly paired at all. The Ps-Bede mentions the liquids twice, first without reference to the evangelists: *Quot sunt flumina paradisi? Quatuor: Phison, Geon, Tigris, Euphrates; lac, mel, vinum et oleum* and secondly relating the evangelists and liquids: *Matheus mel, Marcus lac, Lucas vinum, Iohannes oleum, ecclesia paradisum*. The Reference Bible and the Ps-Jerome associate the rivers and evangelists but list the evangelists and the liquids quite separately. The text inserted on fol. 9r in the Gospels of Mael Brigte belongs to this exegetical tradition (see Figure 2.1 and the transcript in the Appendix).

The text first affirms the unity of the fourfold Gospel (lines 1–11) and then, in the standard Vulgate ordering of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the four evangelists are each specifically paired with one of the four liquids (lines 11–22),

9 R. McNally, 'Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition' 115–16; *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* i, 134 n 7; Walter Berschin, 'Why did the Venerable Bede write a second prose Life of Cuthbert?', G. Bonner, D. Rollason, and C. Stancliff (ed), *St Cuthbert: his cult and his community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge 1989) 95–102: 99–100.

10 'Evangelist and the Hiberno-Latin tradition' 116–19; R. McNally, *Der irische Liber de numeris: eine Quellenanalyse des pseudo-isidorischen Liber de numeris* (Diss., Munich 1957) 79–80 (for *Liber de numeris* 4, 19); Ps-Jerome, PL 30, 534 B; Ps-Bede PL 94 543, 551 D; Reference Bible, Paris, BN lat 11561, fol. 132r–v.

11 *The Book of Secrets of Enoch* in R.H. Charles (ed), *Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford 1913), ii 448; *Visio Pauli* in M.R. James (ed), *The apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford 1924) 538. M. McNamara, *The apocrypha in the Irish church* (Dublin 1975, repr 1984) no. 91. Maire Herbert and M. McNamara (ed), *Irish biblical apocrypha* (Edinburgh 1989) 2, 165 for translation from vernacular *Saltair na rann* which uses the apocryphal *Vita Adae et Evae*. It associates the four paradisaal rivers, the four liquids and the cardinal directions, e.g. 'Phison, the stream of oil, flowed eastward' and incorporates the motif of the cosmic directions formed by Adam's name. Brian Murdoch, *The Irish Adam and Eve story from the Saltair na rann* ii, *Commentary* (Dublin 1976) 58.



the four elements (lines 22–37), the four stages of cultivation (lines 38–42) and the four seasons (lines 42–62). The quaternities are not merely listed but used as a means of elucidating both the overall harmony of the four gospels and the distinctive testimony of each of them by means of scriptural allusion, etymology and arcane word associations. Almost the entire text on fol. 9r can be paralleled by sections from the long introduction to the Gospel commentary in Paris, BN lat. 11561, a ninth-century manuscript of the probably eighth-century Hiberno-Latin compilation the Irish Reference Bible. However, the sources, recensions and derivatives of this large work remain matters for debate and even the text still awaits publication, so dogmatic claims about ‘the source’ of the text in Harley 1802 would be premature. Although most of its material (lines 12–37, 42–62) corresponds with one [294] short section of the Paris manuscript, fol. 13 2r–v, there are differences of wording and sequence and the Harley text also has some brief additions which may be paralleled in other strands within the Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition on the gospels. Harley 1802 could be using an existing compilation.

The *Evangelia* text on fol. 9r begins with an image of the essential unity of the four gospels, of one church spread to the four parts of the world, stable and resistant to heresy like an immovable four-square stone. The sense of these opening eleven lines may be closely compared with an earlier section in the Paris manuscript of the Reference Bible, fol. 130r–v, though again there are verbal variants. Harley 1802 alone uses the term ‘heresy’ and the Paris manuscript (fol. 130r) supplies the additional information that ‘Agustin us’ lies behind the image. However, part of the wording in the Paris manuscript, *sive quia lapis quadrangulus non fluctuat stabilitas indicatur evangelica omnibus perversis resistens documentis*, is also found, verbatim, in the opening of the much briefer discussion of the four evangelists which introduces the eighth-century commentary on Matthew’s gospel in Orleans 65 (62).

In its comparison of the four evangelists with the four liquids (lines 12–22), the Harley text follows the order of pairings given in the equivalent passage in the Reference Bible – Matthew and honey, Mark and wine, Luke and milk, John and oil – which differs from the order used in the Ps-Jerome *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum* and the Ps-Isidore *Liber de numeris*. The Reference Bible’s highly compressed explanation of the symbolic suitability of each pairing helps define the particular nature of each Gospel. Matthew is paired with honey, for example, ‘because of the sweetness of the prophetic precepts’ of the law which characterise his gospel (fol. 132r–v). The association of oil with light and anointing probably explain why it is the liquid assigned to John from whose gospel opening the divine light is said to shine. The stated reasons for the pairing of wine and milk with Mark and Luke are opaque but probably involve elliptical scriptural allusions and word play.¹² The explanations are repeated in the Harley text, verbatim in the case of Matthew and Mark,

12 McNally, ‘Evangelists and the Hiberno-Latin tradition’, 119.

and with only slight verbal differences for Luke and John. The liquids are not related to the rivers of paradise.

The Reference Bible fol. 132r explains the association of the four evangelists with the four elements by a variety of arguments: earth is assigned to Matthew because he was thought to be the first of the evangelists, *qui omnium elementorum quasi fundamentum est*; water is paired with Mark because of the description of Christ's baptism in the opening of his Gospel; the etymology of Luke's name evokes the association with air (*Aer Lucas, qui interpretatur consurgens sive elevans ab inferioribus*); John's preoccupation with [295] divinity in his gospel recalls the element of fire and Moses's saying, 'Our God is a consuming fire'. These arguments are exactly repeated in lines 23–37 of the Harley text though with some verbal differences; Harley also reverses the sequence of the sections as found in the Reference Bible where the four liquids follow rather than precede the section on the four elements.

Harley's treatment of the four elements is immediately followed by a somewhat gnomic description of the action of each gospel: *Matteus arat. Marcus seminat. Lucas irrigat. Iohannes incrementum dat* (lines 38–40). These lines do not occur in the Paris manuscript of the Reference Bible but they do occur in the Ps-Isidore and Ps-Bede, where they follow the listing of the four liquids, all without explanation. The Reference Bible fol. 132v includes the basic concept contained in these brief lines however, and develops a full exegesis in which the activities of the four evangelists in ploughing, sowing, watering and 'giving the increase' (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:6–8) is related to the four seasons of the year. Matthew is associated with winter and ploughing, Mark with spring and sowing, Luke with summer and watering, and John with autumn and, in his treatment of Christ's divinity, the bringing to maturity of what had been prepared by the other evangelists. The image of the unity and completeness of the four seasons of the year as a means of demonstrating the divinely ordained nature of the four gospels is further detailed by the concluding lines in the *Evangelia* text in Harley 1802 which briefly allude to the twelve apostles whose number accords with the number of months contained within that evangelical image of completeness (lines 62–66).

Omitting this reference to the apostles, the Reference Bible directly follows its treatment of the four seasons by associating the four gospels with the four rivers of Paradise, the four carrying rings of the Ark of the Covenant and the four Living Creatures of Ezekiel's vision. The standard pairing of the evangelists and their four symbolic beasts is then explained with reference to the opening lines of each gospel and they are further revealed to be the four beasts of St John's apocalyptic vision who chant the triple *Sanctus*. Apart from supplying a few additional details (such as the particular pairing of the evangelists with the four named paradisaal rivers and their etymologies) the Reference Bible here essentially follows Jerome's *Plures fuisse*. The *Evangelia* text in Harley 1802 fol. 9r is thus a selection of non-biblical cosmological quaternities from the Hiberno-Latin tradition of exegesis on the four gospels which do not occur in the *Plures fuisse*.

The question of why this exegetical text forms an apparently arbitrary interpolation into Matthew's gospel in Harley 1802 requires a closer consideration of the character of the manuscript and of the *Evangelia's* position within it. [296] The prefatory materials, the lay-out and the decoration of the gospel text itself in Harley 1802 preserve the influence of early Insular gospel books and of particular traditions within that genre. Françoise Henry noted that alongside Scandinavian-inspired ornament some of its initials 'are not very different from those drawn in the late eighth-century for the Book of Mulling and the Stowe Missal'.¹³ Despite its small size (165 × 121 mm) Harley 1802 has elaborate initials for the four gospel incipits which get progressively larger from the 'Liber generationis' of Matthew to the 'In principio' of John. Most ornate of all is the sacred monogram XPI opening Matthew 1:18 whose decorative elaboration is one of the distinguishing features of early Insular gospels, already well-developed in the earliest surviving gospel book, the Book of Durrow.

Enlarged, coloured and occasionally ornamented letters highlight certain passages which are also accentuated in various early Insular gospel books, most notably in the Passion and Resurrection accounts of Matthew and Luke. Minor enlarged initials mark texts which were used in the monastic office: the Pater Noster, the Magnificat and the Benedictus (f 19, 88, 88v). In Matthew's gospel a number of Christ's sayings, particularly the parables of the kingdom of heaven, are clearly marked (e.g. fol. 32r–33r). Certain passages of text are treated as a decorative unit: the initial B's of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3–11 are enlarged, coloured and listed under each other (f 16v). Although the gospel text is written in continuous lines in a block lay-out, not *per cola et commata*, the genealogies in Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3: 23–38 are arranged in the traditional columns with enlarged initials, touched by colour, for the names of Christ's ancestors (fols. 4r–v; 91v–92).

The contents and lay-out of the preliminary texts in this twelfth-century manuscript also recall early Insular practices. Like a small group of manuscripts including the Book of Durrow and the Book of Armagh, Harley 1802 confines the general prefatory texts which normally open a gospel codex to Jerome's *Novum opus* alone (f 1–3r). Patrick McGurk has noted that this practice, which may also have been followed in the now incomplete Book of Kells, is 'an Irish feature though it almost certainly went back to an ancient imported exemplar'.¹⁴ Harley's text of the glossary of Hebrew names is the abbreviated corrupt list first extant in the early seventh-century Old Latin Gospels, Dublin Trinity College Library, MS 55 and peculiar to a small group of eleven manuscripts of early Insular origin or association, including [297] the Books of Durrow, Kells and Armagh. These three

13 F. Henry and G.L. Marsh-Micheli, 'A century of Irish illumination (1070–1170)', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy conference* 62 (1962) 148–52: 151.

14 Patrick McGurk, 'The texts at the beginning of the book', P. Fox (ed), *The Book of Kells: commentary* (Lucerne 1990) 38.

books are also among the very small number of examples which group the four individual gospel prefaces together at the beginning of the whole book rather than distributing each in front of its appropriate gospel.¹⁵ The idiosyncratic arrangement of the gospel prefaces in Harley 1802 has elements of both practices.

The prologue or *argumentum* to Matthew's gospel on fol. 3r-v is directly followed by the gospel opening *Liber generationis* and the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:1-17). The early Insular tendency to insert decorative or textual material between the Matthean genealogy and the *chi-rho* opening Matthew 1:18 however, which is particularly marked in the ninth-century MacDurnan Gospels from Armagh,¹⁶ is even more fantastically developed in the later Armagh manuscript, Harley 1802. Matthew 1: 17, the end of the genealogy on fol. 4v, is separated from the next verse of the gospel text by ten whole folios which contain the glossary of Hebrew names (f 4v-5), the *argumenta* to Mark, Luke and John (f 6-8v), the exegetical Latin text on the evangelists (f 9) and an Irish text (f 9v). The *argumenta* to Mark, Luke and John have thus become separated from the *argumentum* to Matthew by the intervening genealogy and glossary, but could never have been intended to preface their respective gospels individually because they are written out consecutively.

The Matthean genealogy in Harley 1802 was clearly regarded as important, as witnessed by its opening decorated initial, columnar lay-out and heavy glossing, but it ends half-way down fol. 4v at verse 17 with the rubric *finit* and is immediately followed on the same folio by the glossary of Hebrew names. The genealogy therefore functions quite separately from Matthew 1:18 which begins a new page on fol. 10 with a splendid *chi-rho* marking the opening of the gospel proper with the story of the Nativity. The *chi-rho* is glossed with the explanation of the word *evangelium* as *bonum nuntium*, a term frequently used in the Reference Bible's introduction to the gospels. Some early Insular gospel books had actually inserted a rubric over Matthew 1:18, *Incipit evangelium secundum Matteum* (for example the Lindisfarne Gospels fol. 29, [298] the Cutbercht Gospels fol. 22 and the Cadmug Gospels fol. 2v) and the practice of treating the genealogy as a decorative unit in some way mirrors the treatment of the Matthean genealogy as

15 McGurk, *ibid.* 37-41 (prefaces), 45-50 (Hebrew names in ten MSS of Insular origin or association); J. O'Reilly, 'The Book of Kells and two Breton gospel books', C. Laurent and I.I. Davis (ed), *Irlande et Bretagne* (Rennes 1994) 217-27 for an eleventh example, London, British Library, Royal MS I.A. XVIII. O. Szerwinniack, 'Des recueils d'interprétations de noms hébreux chez les irlandais et le wisigoth Theodulf', *Scriptorium* 48 (1994) 197-258.

16 London, Lambeth Palace Library, 1370; J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular manuscripts, sixth to ninth century: a survey of manuscripts illuminated in the British Isles* (London 1978) cat 70, pl 321-22, 326 for columnar listing of the genealogy fol. 2 and insertion of Matthew's portrait before the *chi-rho*, fol. 4v-5. Some unusual variant readings in the MacDurnan Gospels are shared by the Book of Armagh and the two twelfth-century Armagh gospel books, Harley 1023 and Harley 1082: Martin MacNamara, 'The Echternach Gospels and the MacDurnan Gospels: some common readings and their significance', *Peritia* 6-7 (1987-88) 217-22.

a separate text or book, literally the *Liber generationis*, in Hiberno-Latin gospel commentaries.¹⁷

Each word of Matthew's opening line, 'Liber generationis Jesu Christi filii David filii Abraham' is traditionally expounded through etymologies, scriptural associations and the rendering of the holy names into the three sacred languages. Commentators may work their way through some or even all of the Hebrew names of Christ's ancestors in vv 2–16 and the numerology of their grouping in v 17 in order to unriddle their encoded clues to Christ's human and divine natures, his royal and priestly descent, the process of redemption and revelation. The Matthean genealogy is treated as a distillation of the entire fourfold Gospel. Both in early liturgical gospel books and in exegetical texts, therefore, the Matthean genealogy became detached from and prefatory to the main gospel opening at Matthew 1:18. The *argumenta* of Mark, Luke and John in Harley 1802, fols. 6–8v, though positioned after the Matthean genealogy and therefore technically within the gospel text, may, in the context of this tradition be regarded as part of the prefatory material to the gospel proper. In this sense Harley 1802 offers a variant of the rare practice, seen in the Book of Durrow and the Book of Kells, of bunching the individual gospel prologues in the preliminary material of the gospel codex.

Following the *argumenta* to Mark, Luke and John is the separate *Evangelia* text occupying fol. 9r (Figure 2.1). It consists of sixty-six lines in abbreviated minuscule arranged in two columns. There is no title or rubric but the opening, *Evangelia iiii*, has a considerably enlarged coloured initial standing in the margin. Its offset appears on the facing page, fol. 8v which in turn has left the impress of its initials on fol. 9r. The second column of the *Evangelia* text does not abruptly break off but finishes some eight ruled lines from the bottom of the page; a separate text of twenty quatrains in Irish occupies the verso. The *Evangelia* text seems, therefore, to be present in its original position and extent in the manuscript.

While the inclusion of a substantial exegetical text within an Insular gospel book is unusual, the positioning and content of the *Evangelia* text in Harley [299] 1802 is not quite as arbitrary as may first appear. First, as has been seen, the particular concentration of the commentary in the manuscript on Matthew's gospel and the heavy glossing of its opening genealogy as a separate book echo the practice of early Hiberno-Latin exegesis. In this tradition, discussion of the four gospels and their related quaternities often occurs in the introduction to

17 London, British Library, Cotton Nero D. IV; Vienna, Nationalbibl. Cod. 1224; Fulda, Landesbibl. Codex Bonifatianus. Alexander, *Insular MSS*, cat 9, pl 44; cat 37, pl 183; cat 49. P. McGurk, 'The Irish pocket gospel book', *Sacris Erudiri* 8 (1956) 249–70 at 257–58. Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the Matthean genealogy was extensive and well-established and could carry a sophisticated Christology, for example Munich Clm 6233, fol. 7v–26r which devotes 38 folios to Matthew 1:1–18 and, like Vienna 940, draws on seventh-century material, Ailerán's, *Interpretatio mystica progenitorum Christi* and *Interpretatio moralis* (Bischoff, 'Turning-points', cat 25, cat 17 I, cat 23). Ailerán's work is being edited by Aidan Breen.

commentaries on the four gospels or on the gospel of Matthew alone, as in the Reference Bible and Orleans 65 (62) respectively. Although the exegetical text on the four gospels in Harley 1802 is not placed before the incipit of Matthew's gospel but in the collection of materials inserted between the genealogy and Matthew 1:18, it has been suggested here that it can, nevertheless, be regarded as a prefatory text in the light of the Insular tradition for treating Matthew 1: 18 as the opening of Matthew's gospel.

Secondly, many Hiberno-Latin works on the gospels include apocryphal information on their authorship such as the place and language of composition. Some of this material would overlap with that in the *Plures fuisse* and in the Monarchian prologues or *argumenta* which normally preface the individual gospels in Gospel books.¹⁸ The *Evangelia* text on fol. 9 in the Harley manuscript does not itself contain such apocryphal material but it does immediately follow that contained in the unusually bunched *argumenta* on fol. 6–8v. Thirdly, Hiberno-Latin exegesis including the Ps-Jerome, the Reference Bible, Orleans 65(62), Munich Clm 6233 and 6235 and Angers 55, also makes use of standard etymologies of the evangelists' names, such as can be found in Isidore's *Etymologiae* (VII ix 17), for example: *Mattaueus in Hebreo donatus exprimitur. Idem et appellatus Levi ex tribu a qua ortus fuit [. . .] Lucas ipse consurgens, sive ipse elevans*. These traditional etymologies are inserted in a tiny minuscule over the names of the evangelists in the titles to the appropriate *argumenta* in Harley 1802, fol. 3r and 6r as part of the interlinear commentary. The *Evangelia* text on fol. 9r is thus only one element from the traditional Hiberno-Latin exegetical repertoire on the four gospels here transferred to the context of a gospel book.

Fourthly, the positioning of the Irish text on the verso of the *Evangelia* text may not be fortuitous but may reflect a sustained interest in the theme of the fourfold Gospel. The work of the twelve apostles in taking the gospel to the four corners of the earth is often incorporated in exegesis on the gospel quaternities. In the Reference Bible fol. 132r for example, the passage immediately preceding the sections which are mirrored in the Harley manuscript's *Evangelia* text relates the writing and teaching mission of the four evangelists in the four parts of the world and Christ's commission to the [300] apostles at the end of Matthew's gospel to preach to all: *Euntes ergo nunc docete omnes gentes* (Matthew 28:19). The Harley *Evangelia* text's brief concluding reference to the twelve apostles on fol. 9r may help explain the choice of the Irish verses which immediately follow on fol. 9v as they describe the appearance, mission and death of the twelve apostles. Some support for this suggestion may be found in another Irish text which is also included among the materials inserted between the Matthean genealogy and Matthew 1:18 and also offers apocryphal information which at first sight may seem gratuitous. It gives details of the appearances and gifts of the Magi whose canonical story is

18 John Chapman, *Notes on the early history of the Vulgate gospels* (Oxford 1907) 217–37 for Monarchian Prologues.

not told until Matthew 2:1–12, but as it also supplies the names of the Magi in Hebrew, Greek and Latin and their etymologies it may have been seen as a pertinent supplement to the end of the glossary of Hebrew names on fol. 5v.¹⁹ There is thus an extraordinary layering of comment of different types and in different languages on texts which are themselves explanatory and prefatory to the opening of the gospel text proper at Matthew 1:18.

Finally, the two stubs which come between fol. 9v and the *chi-rho* on fol. 10r may mark the position of one or even two missing pictures which could have emphasised further the theme of the four gospels. The Macdurnan Gospels and the Cutbercht Gospels provide precedents for positioning author portraits of Matthew not in the usual place before the *Liber generationis* text opening his gospel but between Matthew 1:17 and 1:18 as part of the prefatory material to the second opening.²⁰ In the case of Harley 1802 the missing picture may have shown Matthew's symbol rather than an author portrait, in line with the two surviving pictures of individual symbols prefacing the gospels of Mark and Luke on fol. 60v and 86v (Plates 2.1 and 2.2). Alternatively, the particular association of Matthew's gospel with the theme of the harmony of the four gospels may have been given pictorial display in a four-symbols page. In the Book of Armagh, for example, the four-symbols page on fol. 32v actually prefaces the gospel of Matthew, whereas depictions of the individual symbols are used to preface each of the remaining three gospels.²¹

Carl Nordenfalk suggested that the rare combination of the four evangelists with the apocryphal theme of the four liquids (which he thought only survived in the Ps-Jerome's *Expositio*) entered Insular culture through an early illustrated copy of Tatian's *Diatessaron*. Although it is now clear that the [301] transmission and dissemination of the theme must have been a more complex process, the suggestion is still of some interest to the present discussion of Harley 1802. In a very late copy of the *Diatessaron* which Nordenfalk believed preserves the essential iconography of an Early Christian illustrated version, there is a schematised drawing of cosmic and gospel harmony showing the four evangelist symbols standing at the corners of a square inscribed with their names and the names of the four rivers of Eden and the four paradisaal liquids.²²

19 B. Bischoff, 'Turning points', 90–94 for Hiberno-Latin commentaries on the Magi pericope in Matthew 2:1–12; R. McNally, 'The three holy kings in early Irish Latin writing', P. Granfield and J.A. Jungmann (ed), *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten* (Münster 1970), ii 667–90; for translation of Irish text on Magi in the Leabhar Breac, which derives from an early Latin text, see M. Herbert and M. McNamara, *Irish Biblical apocrypha*, 36–42.

20 Alexander, *Insular MSS*, cat 70, pl 326; cat 37, pl 181.

21 *ibid.* cat 53, pl 230, 226, 229.

22 C. Nordenfalk, 'An illustrated Diatessaron', *Art Bull* 50 (1968) 119–40; 130–35 for discussion of Florence, Laurentian Lib, Cod. Orient. 81, fol. 128v (fig 14). Meyer Schapiro and seminar, 'The miniatures of the Florence Diatessaron', *Art Bull* 55 (1973) 494–531 for criticism of the thesis which Nordenfalk re-stated with modifications and briefly citing R. McNally's 1971 paper



Plate 2.1 Symbol of St Mark. © The British Library Board. MS Harley 1802, fol. 60v.



Plate 2.2 Symbol of St Luke. © The British Library Board. MS Harley 1802, fol. 86v.

Nordenfalk argued that the same early *Diatessaron* drawing could also explain the origins of the rare Insular iconography of the 'terrestrial' evangelist symbol. This type depicts the four symbols as full-length figures without wings or attributes in contrast to the usual half-length winged 'heavenly' type with haloes and gospel books. The terrestrial type is first extant in the individual symbol pages of the Book of Durrow and appears in similar context in the Echternach Gospels and the fragmentary gospel book now divided between London, British Library, Cotton MS Otho C.V. and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 197B, and is used in the four-symbols frontispiece in the Trier Gospels.²³ The scriptural visions of the four beasts specifically describe them as winged beings and the distinctive full-length Insular iconographic type soon acquired wings, as in the Book of Kells, the Lichfield Gospels and the Book of Armagh. The original wingless, unhaloed full-length type of evangelist symbol, however, curiously re-appeared some three centuries later in two related twelfth-century gospel-books produced in Armagh: British Library, Harley 1023, where the symbols of the lion on fol. 10v and the eagle on fol. 64v have survived, and Harley 1802 which preserves a closely similar lion on fol. 60v facing the gospel of Mark and the ox on fol. 86v prefacing Luke's gospel (see Plates 2.1 and 2.2).²⁴ The broad influence of the evangelist symbols in the Book of Armagh (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 52, c. AD 807) on the two later Armagh manuscripts cannot account for the rare and archaic iconographic type they use nor for the bizarre re-orientation to a vertical format of their horizontally-posed [302] evangelist symbols. The ox in Harley 1802 fol. 86v in particular offers the closest comparison in Insular art, both in its iconographic type and vertical presentation, to the ox in Nordenfalk's *Diatessaron* drawing which is inscribed with the names of the paradisal liquids.

An early Carolingian copy of Ps-Jerome's *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum*, St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 124, is unusually illustrated with pictures of the four evangelist symbols. They are winged but of the full-length unhaloed type suggesting Insular derivation and are inscribed with the names of the evangelists, their symbolic beasts and the four paradisal liquids in the ordering of the Ps-Jerome's text: *Matheus homo et mel; Iohannis aquila vinum; Marcus leo lac; Lucas vitulus oleum*.²⁵ However, there are no such inscriptions to link the exegetical text on the evangelists and the four liquids in Harley 1802 with the images of the evangelist

'Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition' in 'The Diatessaron miniatures once more', *Art Bull* 55 (1973) 532–46.

23 Nordenfalk, 'Illustrated Diatessaron', pl 22a–24d; Alexander, *Insular MSS*, cat 6 pl 14–17; cat 11 pl 54–56, 59; cat 12, pl 57–58; cat 26, pl 114.

24 Alexander, *Insular MSS*, cat 52, pl 231; cat 22, pl 230 (Book of Armagh); cat 76, pl 341, 344 (Harley 1023); cat 77, pl. 342, 345 (Harley 1802).

25 St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 124, 7, 66, 88, I 00. Nordenfalk, 'An illustrated Diatessaron', pl 25–28; Bruno Greisser, 'Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der Expositio IV evangeliorum des Ps-Hieronymus', *Rev. Bénédictine* 49 (1937) 279–321, cat 19, 289; A. Bruckner, *Scriptoria medi aevi Helvetica* ii (Geneva 1936) 63, Tafeln 23–24.

symbols. The loss of the gospel prefaces and almost the whole of Matthew's gospel in Harley 1023, which also uses the terrestrial symbols from the same source as Harley 1802, makes it difficult to speculate on the significance of the choice of this iconography in Harley 1802 and whether it had any particular connection with the exegetical text on fol. 9r other than the fact that to the twelfth-century compiler they both represented ancient and venerable Irish tradition on the four evangelists.

Commenting on other twelfth-century Irish manuscripts with traditional elements, Françoise Henry concluded that the decorative similarities between the twelfth-century Irish gospel book Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 122 and the 'Maihingen Gospels' (that is the Augsburg Gospels produced in the Insular centre at Echternach in the early eighth century) 'are too striking to be fortuitous. They are such as to incline us to assume the existence of a prototype of the Maihingen Gospels in Ireland which might have remained at Armagh or Down and could have served as inspiration to the painter of the twelfth-century manuscript'.²⁶ For the student of early Insular gospel books Harley 1802 also indicates the survival at Armagh of earlier and distinctive [303] traditions of gospel book production including specific features of lay-out, decoration and prefatory texts shared with a small group of manuscripts including the Book of Durrow, the Book of Kells and the Book of Armagh. In addition to the continuing presence of the Book of Armagh itself, there must have been at least one example of the rare iconography of the terrestrial evangelist symbol available and presumably one which was extremely early or derived from a revered exemplum because the symbols in Harley 1802, also used in Harley 1023, have not been modified with wings as in the Book of Armagh and because their vertical orientation perhaps derives from a primitive stage in the evolution of the individual symbol page whose first extant example is the Book of Durrow.

That early Insular gospel books did sometimes include expository material on the four evangelists is evident in the Augsburg Gospels' inclusion of Ailerán's seventh-century poem on the canon tables²⁷ and in the Ps-Juvencus lines inscribed

26 F. Henry, 'A century of Irish illumination', 154. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Is the Augsburg Gospel codex a Northumbrian manuscript?', Bonner et al. (ed), *St Cuthbert, his cult and his community*, 189–201: 198 has shown that the bible text in the Augsburg Gospels belongs to the Irish family DEEpLQR and that it shares the largest number of readings (52) with the Book of Armagh. Nancy Netzer ('The origin of the beast canons reconsidered', Felicity O'Mahony (ed), *The Book of Kells* (Aldershot 1994) 322–32) has further argued that the exemplar of the Augsburg Gospels was a seventh-century Irish gospel book with the same recension of the canon tables, corresponding with the numbers of gospel concordances cited in Ailerán's poem which is inscribed in fol. 1v of the Augsburg Gospels. [Editors' note: The manuscripts indicated DEEpQLR by Ó Cróinín are: D = Book of Armagh (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 52); E = British Libr., MS Egerton 609; Ep = Echternach Gospels (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 9389); L = Lichfield Gospels (Lichfield Cathedral Libr., MS 1); Q = Book of Kells (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 58); R = Macregol or Rushworth Gospels (Oxford, Bodleian Libr., MS Auct. D.2.19)]

27 Discussed in the article cited in note 1. Ailerán's text as in D. Bruyne, *Prefaces de la bible latine* (Namur 1912) 185 for critical edition; text of poem as in the Augsburg Gospels (Augsburg,

in the Cadmug Gospels, the MacRegol Gospels and the MacDurnan Gospels.²⁸ However, although Harley 1802 may open a window on the earlier Insular period, we cannot be certain of the exact viewing-point being offered and its inclusion of the *Evangelia* text on fol. 9r may not necessarily reflect the practice of an early Insular gospel book. What is clear is that Harley 1802 preserves many features of a particular group of Insular gospel books *and* of early Hiberno-Latin exegesis. Not only does its *Evangelia* text closely parallel eighth-century texts, themselves of a compilatory nature, but the prefatory pages in which it is set also reflect important features of Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the introduction to the four gospels and to Matthew in particular. This is consistent with Jean Rittmueller's findings on Hiberno-Latin sources underlying later sections of the book's commentary on Matthew. The Gospels of Mael Brigte provides an eloquent part of the evidence for assessing the degree to which ancient Irish monastic culture was a still living tradition in Armagh in the year following St Malachy's resignation of the see and immediately before his introduction of the international Cistercian order. [304]

Universitätsbibl. Cod. 1.2.40.2 olim Maihingen) in Nancy Netzer, *Cultural interplay in the eighth century: the Trier Gospels and the making of a scriptorium at Echternach* (Cambridge 1994) 205–206.

28 McGurk, 'Irish pocket gospel book', 253 n 1; M. Werner, 'The four evangelist symbols in the Book of Durrow', *Gesta* 8 (1969) 3–17, n 7; L. Nees, 'The colophon drawing in the Book of Mulling: a supposed Irish monastery plan and the tradition of terminal illustration in early medieval manuscripts', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Stud* 5 (1983) 67–91: 84, pl 7. I am grateful to Dr Seán Connolly for supplying the Appendix that follows.

DIPLOMATIC TRANSCRIPT OF HARLEIAN MS 1802, FOL. 9R

Seán Connolly

Euangelia .iiii. id(e)o sunt q(ua) una(m)
æcl(es)iam p(er) .iiii. partes mundi
dilatanda(m) describ(un)t, s(i)u(e) quia
quadrangalum¹ u(er)bum i(m)mota-
bile (est), ut lapis quadrangal(us)² 5
non uacillet, ut hi(e)r(onymus) d(ici)t, p(er) h(oc)
stabilitas indicat(ur). euang-
elia³ o(mn)ib(us) hersibus⁴ resistens,
s(i)u(e) quia duorum u(el) t(ri)um testiu(m)
nu(meru)s i(n) lege co(m)mendat(us) (est). unusq(u)i(s)q(ue) 10
eorum (tri)b(us)⁵ reliq(u)is utitur.
Euangelia .iiii. liq(u)orib(us) co(m)p(ora)n-
tur.⁶ matheus melli p(ro)p(ter) p(er)fec-
torum dulcedinem p(rae)ceptoru(m)
comparat(ur). Marc(us) uino p(ro)p(ter) 15
austeritatem penitentiae in
p(r)imordio sui sermonis i(n)ti(m)a-
tam. Lucas lacti p(ro)p(ter) sinceræ⁷
(et) misticæ doctrinae candore(m).
Iohannis oleo p(ro)p(ter) eminentem (et) o(mn)ia 20

1 *lege* quadrangulum

2 *lege* quadrangulus

3 euangelia] *sic cod.*; *lege* evangelica. Above the letters -uan- in the same hand or one very similar is written .i. followed by something closely resembling an inverted c followed by an n or m: (com)n or (con)m or (com)m or (con)n; it is difficult to interpret: id est, comm (?). Likewise above the -ia of euangelia apparently in the same hand is added i .iiii.

4 *lege* heresibus

5 (tri)b(us)] *iiib(us) cod.*

6 *lege* comparantur

7 sinceræ] -e seems to have been partly erased.

i(llost)rantem ⁸ diuinitatis luce(m) q(uae) ipsi(us) uoluminis exordio corruscat.	
Elim(en)tis q(uo)q(ue) .iiii. ^{or} principalibus euangelia compara(n)t(ur). Matte(us) t(er)ræ q(uia) o(mn)ium elim(en)tor(um) q(u)asi funda- m(en)tum (est) comparat(ur). Marcus	25
aquae babtismatis q(u)i i(m)primis loquit(ur) sacr(a)m(en)tum. Lucas æri qui interp(retatur) ipse eleuat(us) qui [305] ab inferiorib(us) nascit(ur)i ho(min)is mis	30
t(er)iis us(que) ad ascentione(m) d(omi)ni in c(ae)l(u)m continuato sermone per- tingit s(icut) aer a t(er)ra ad c(ae)l(u)m por- rigit(ur). iohannis ⁹ igni qui di- uinitatis igne(m) o(mn)ia penitr(a)n-	35
tem suo p(ro)tendit uolumine, d(ice)nte moyse: <i>d(eu)s n(oste)r ignis (con)sum(en)s (est)</i> . Matte(us) arat, marc(us) se- minat, Lucas irrigat, ioha(nnis) increm(en)tu(m) dat, ut messis mul-	40
ta fidelium sit p(er)fecta atq(ue) mat(ur)a .iiii. ^{or} q(uo)q(ue) temporibus anni comparant(ur). Matteus hiemi i(n)itia p(er) pa(m)pinos o(mn)iu(m) fruc- tuu(m) coalenti, un(de) arare d(icitu)r.	45
Marc(us) u(er)i p(os)t hieme(m) in flores et gemmas er(um)penti, un(de) semi(n)are dicit(ur). Lucas æstati p(os)t u(er)nu(m) tempus cre- scentia t(er)ræ germina pluui-	50
alib(us) aquis irriganti ac so- lis claritate eo quod ipse ut matte(us) p(rae)ceptis abundet diuinis (et) diuinitatem uirtu- tib(us) plurimis contestat(ur), un(de)	55
irrigare d(icitu)r. ioha(nnis) autu(m)no post æstatis calore(m) (et) irri- gatione(m) cuncta ad mat(ur)ita- tis p(er)fectione(m) p(ro)uehenti cui narrandæ chr(ist)i diuinitatis	60

8 i(llost)rantem] īrantem *cod.*

9 *lege* iohannis

(et) consu(m)mandi canonis perfectio data (est) a d(omi)no, un(de) incrementu(m) dare d(icitu)r. His .iiii. te(m)poribus annus domini acceptabilis cum duadeno¹⁰ ap(osto)lorum nu(mer)o q(ua)si .xii. m(en)sib(us) completur. [306]

65

¹⁰ *lege duodeno*

GOSPEL HARMONY AND THE NAMES OF CHRIST

Insular images of a patristic theme

Imperial poets and historians mapping the horizon of the Roman world saw the western isles as its furthest limits. For Christian writers the Lord's final command to his disciples to teach and baptise all peoples (Matthew 28.19–20) had a particular application to those islands whose conversion would complete the process of taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Accordingly, in the fifth-century pastoral epistles of St Patrick his mission to the Irish is presented as the fulfilment of scriptural prophecy: 'the Gospel has been preached to the limit beyond which no-one dwells'.¹ The theme is monumentally developed by Bede (c. 673–735) in his account of the conversion, by Irish as well as by Roman missionaries, of his Anglo-Saxon forefathers who had settled in post-Roman Britain and had become part of the Christian Roman world. Irish and Anglo-Saxon monks, conscious that living 'on the two uttermost islands of the Ocean' could be construed as coming from the back of beyond,² vigorously used the topos as a foil in asserting the orthodoxy and achievements of an Insular monastic life and culture fully within the universal Church: 'For all we Irish, inhabitants of the world's edge, are disciples of Sts Peter and Paul [. . .] and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic teaching'.³

Incorporation into the Church meant embracing its learning. The Codex Amiatinus and the scholarship of Bede testify to the resources of the Northumbrian monastic community in which they were formed. Recent research on individual Irish scholars including Columbanus, Cummian, and Adomnán of Iona; on the production of works on grammar, computus, and exegesis in seventh-century Ireland; and on eighth-century Hiberno-Latin compendia and biblical commentaries has greatly increased awareness of the wide variety of sources from the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity which were available

1 D. Connelly, *The letters of St Patrick* (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1993), *Confessio*, 41, 70.

2 *Cummian's letter De controversia paschali*, ed. by M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 73, 75. *Bede Ecclesiastical history of the English people*, ed. by B. Colgrave and R. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, repr. 1991), 301, 307.

3 Letter of Columbanus to Pope Boniface IV, 613: *Sancti Columbani opera*, ed. by G.S.M. Walker (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970), Ep. 5, 38–39.

to Insular scholars, of the early reception date of some of those sources and of Insular assimilation of patristic techniques.⁴ At first glance, Insular gospel books do not seem to fit into this milieu. Unlike the Codex Amiatinus they could never be mistaken for sixth-century Mediterranean works. They are readily distinguished by their script and decorative intrusions on the text. Their adaptation of abstract motifs used in native metalwork in secular contexts and their highly stylised use of figural art, usually confined to the representation of the evangelists and their symbolic beasts, have seemed to mark them out as magnificent but barbaric. Attempts to discern ‘meaning’ in some of these designs encounter obvious methodological problems. To some extent the Book of Kells bridges the two worlds by its combination of conventions and motifs peculiar to the Insular gospel book tradition with a wide range of figural images and [73] Mediterranean motifs.⁵ Study of its most famous page has been fundamental in promoting the idea that certain features of the decorative highlighting of the text offer a visual exegesis.

Genealogy and *chi-rho*

The name of Christ was conventionally rendered by its Greek initial letters *chi* and *rho*, depicted as Xp with Latin endings. A distinguishing characteristic of Insular gospel books is their enlargement and decoration of the *nomen sacrum*, often on the scale of a gospel incipit, where it occurs at Matthew 1.18, *Christi autem generatio sic erat*. ‘This magnifying is not found earlier and found later it can be taken as an Insular symptom. One wonders why the Xpi section assumed such importance’.⁶ Suzanne Lewis saw in the *chi-rho* in the Book of Kells fol. 34r a sacred riddle teeming with Christological and eucharistic allusions appropriate to the probable use of this text as a lection at the Vigil of the Nativity (Plate 3.1). The letter *chi* announcing the sacred name could also denote the redeeming Cross; as depicted in Kells, the cosmological character of the *chi-Cross* helps identify the Christ revealed here in Matthew’s account of the nativity with the Creator revealed in his creation. Lewis, following Otto Werckmeister, grounded this persuasive view in the exegesis of Irenaeus, noting that his ‘exposition of salvation through the identity of the creating Logos with the incarnate and crucified Christ does not often occur in patristic writing’ and that

4 D. Ó Corráin, ‘The historical and cultural background of the Book of Kells’, in *The Book of Kells*, ed. by F. O’Mahony (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1994), 1–34; D. Ó Cróinín, *Early medieval Ireland 400–1200* (London & New York: Longman, 1995), 174–214.

5 *The Book of Kells, MS 58, Trinity College Library Dublin*, ed. by P. Fox (Lucerne: Faksimile Verlag, 1990). Date and provenance are still debated: mid-late eighth-century, Iona or shortly after 800, Kells. Discussed by G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: Insular Gospel-books 650–800* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 179–98; B. Meehan, *The Book of Kells* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), 90–92.

6 P. McGurk, ‘The Irish pocket Gospel Book’ (*Sacris Erudiri*, 8, 1956), 249–70 (p. 258).



Plate 3.1 The Book of Kells. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 58, fol. 34r.

only Irenaeus explicates this relationship ‘within the allegorical matrix of the sacred name’.⁷

Questions remain, however, concerning the nature of the connection between the patristic text and the Insular image. Can this Christology be shown to have been familiar elsewhere in Insular monastic culture and in contexts which might explain both its application to Matthew 1.18 in Insular gospel books and their custom of showing the previous seventeen verses as a distinct unit?

Insular assimilation of relevant patristic themes is evident in the work of Bede. In a homily on Matthew 1.18–25 for the Christmas Eve vigil, Bede ponders the etymology and Matthew’s explanation of the significance of the three names and titles – Jesus, Emmanuel, Christ – and, like Irenaeus, also uses the opening of John’s gospel to show that in the birth of the Saviour described by Matthew ‘the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us’. The gospel passage on which Bede based the homily, however, does not begin with the opening words of Matthew 1.18, *Christi autem generatio*, but, in the manner of known Roman lections, with the second part of that verse, *Cum esset desponsata mater eius Maria Ioseph*.⁸

Irenaeus (d. 202/3) had defended the divine authority of scripture by reconciling its apparently discordant elements. It was in this context that he used the acclamation of Christ’s divinity in the opening lines of John’s gospel to expound the account of Christ’s human descent at the beginning of Matthew. He notes that Matthew does not say *lesu*, but ‘*Christi autem generatio sic erat*’ in order to show that Jesus born of Mary was the prophesied Messiah (Christ) whom Isaiah had called Emmanuel (God with us).⁹

Other patristic apologists were concerned to defend the four gospels as the complementary facets of a single gospel. Like Irenaeus, they cited scriptural texts which attest the divine order underlying the number four, particularly the heavenly theophanies of the four beasts described by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1) and the apostle John [74] (Revelation 4.6–8), which were interpreted as figures of the revelation of Christ through the fourfold Gospel. The four beasts – the man, lion, ox and eagle – were read as symbols of the four evangelists and of their gospels’ distinctive but harmonious testimonies to the humanity, kingship, priesthood and divinity of Christ.

7 S. Lewis, ‘Sacred calligraphy: the chi-rho page in the Book of Kells’ (*Traditio*, 36, 1980), 139–59 (p. 143 and n. 13, referring to Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 4.17.6, 5.1 8.3). Werckmeister, *Irisch-northumbrische Buchmalerei des 8. Jahrhunderts und monastische Spiritualität* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967), 147–70.

8 *Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels*, trans. by L.T. Martin and D. Hurst (2 vols. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991), I, pp. 44–50, 73–83. C.A. Farr, ‘Liturgical Influences on the Decoration of the Book of Kells’, in *Studies in Insular Art and Archaeology*, ed. by C. Karkov and R. Farrell, *American Early Medieval Studies* I, 1991, 29.

9 Matthew 1.18, 21–3; Isaiah 7.14. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3.16.2, ed. by F. Saguard (*Sources chrétiennes*, 34, Paris: 1952), 278.

Unpromising though it may seem to modern readers, Matthew's enumeration of Christ's ancestors (Matthew 1.1–17) was a crucial text in this apologetic task. The reconciliation of its inconsistencies and manifest differences from the genealogy listed in Luke 3.23–38, and from the account of the Incarnation at the opening of John's gospel, became a standard means of demonstrating in miniature the harmony underlying the fourfold Gospel. Its most authoritative expression is in Augustine's *De consensu evangelistarum*.¹⁰ The first book articulates the harmony of the distinctive testimonies of each of the four evangelists symbolically embodied by their respective beasts. The second book illustrates this harmony through a textual and spiritual exposition of Matthew 1.1–17 to reveal the complementary aspects of Christ's identity which lie concealed beneath the literal text of Christ's genealogy. Augustine stresses that Matthew's 'Book of the generation of Jesus Christ' shows the generation according to the flesh of the only-begotten Son of God, that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1.14). The text from John is reiterated in Augustine's detailed treatment of the Matthean genealogy in Sermon 51, alluding to the classic statement in Philippians 2.6–11 that Christ emptied himself of his glory but not of his divinity at his incarnation and that, paradoxically, it was through his descent into humanity and the death on the Cross that his name, *Dominus Iesu Christus*, was exalted through all creation.

This rich exegetical tradition was part of the patristic inheritance of the West and illumines though does not, of itself, explain why Insular gospel books in particular should have highlighted and separated the Matthean genealogy (Matthew 1.1–17) from the *chi-rho* marking v. 18. Gospel commentaries among the seventh- and eighth-century Hiberno-Latin exegetical works preserved in Carolingian manuscripts, however, provide a large body of contemporary evidence, not only of Insular familiarity with the patristic tradition, but of a distinctive reading of Matthew 1.18 which has some suggestive parallels with the visual structuring of the text in Insular gospel books.¹¹ Like St John, St Matthew was believed to have been an apostle and thus to have received his information directly from Christ. Matthew was regarded as the senior evangelist who wrote first and who was the only

10 H. Merkel, *Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien: Ihre polemische und apologetische Behandlung in der Alten Kirche bis zu Augustin* (Tübingen, 1971) reviewed by B. Metzger (*Journal of Biblical Literature* 92, 1973), 132–34. Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum*: P. Schaf, *Augustine: Harmony of the Gospels* (New York: Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, 1888) 6, pp. 102–103.

11 'Hiberno-Latin' refers to works produced in Ireland and in Irish foundations and centres of influence on the continent. B. Bischoff, 'Turning-points in the history of Latin exegesis in the early Irish church AD 650–800', in *Biblical Studies: the medieval Irish Contribution*, ed. by M. McNamara (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1976), 74–160, nos 16.1–26; C.D. Wright, 'Hiberno-Latin and Irish-influenced biblical commentaries, florilegia and homily collections', in *The Sources of Anglo-Saxon literary Culture: a trial Version*, ed. by F.M. Biggs, T.D. Hill, and P.E. Szarmach (Binghamton, New York, 1990), 87–123. Most of this material is unedited, much remains unpublished.

one of the four to write in Hebrew. Above all, Matthew's primacy in Jerome's ordering of the Vulgate gospel sequence and Jerome's own commentary on Matthew's gospel were influential in establishing his popularity with Hiberno-Latin gospel commentators. Such factors do not, however, explain the extraordinary emphasis which they place on the genealogy in Matthew; their exegesis freely incorporates material from Jerome's commentary, but often goes well beyond it.

Modern scripture scholars have shown how genealogies in the Old Testament are primarily used not to record biological descent but to establish identity, sometimes the collective identity of a tribe or group, or to authenticate the lineage of cultic office-holders such as priests and kings.¹² Genealogies were used also as a device to establish epochs and as a framework for historical writing. The clerical caste within Insular barbarian society readily understood the importance of ancestry in establishing identity and in buttressing claims to office in the tribal society described in the Old Testament and [75] would have shared many of the assumptions and techniques of biblical genealogists. Early Irish churchmen produced an unrivalled corpus of genealogical material, written with contemporary objectives, as Donnchadh Ó Corráin has shown; their view of themselves as 'the tribe of the Church' was in some respects, such as in the area of law and relationships with secular society, influenced by the Pentateuch model of the tribe of Levi and the hereditary priesthood of Aaron.¹³ Patristic exegesis of the genealogy expounded not only Christ's priestly descent but the priestly nature of Christ's 'tribe', the Church, figured in Christ's Hebrew ancestors, even though, by definition, they lived before the Incarnation and the age of grace and many of them, notably Abraham, lived even before the age of the Law. Insular writers held a similar view of their own ancestors who had lived before the conversion of their people yet had a continuing contribution to make to the genealogy and therefore to the claims and identity of contemporary dynasts.¹⁴

The early Irish use of Jerome's *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominis* and Isidore's *Etymologiae* partly reflects the interest of non-Romans in Latin vocabulary and their appropriation of standard exegetical techniques, but they were drawn also to the more esoteric elements of the inheritance.¹⁵ Their fascination with the potency of names, titles, epithets, numbers, lists, classifications and instances of first occurrences in the biblical text became characteristic mannerisms, as did

12 R.E. Brown, *The birth of the Messiah* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), 65–68.

13 D. Ó Corráin, 'Irish origin legends and genealogy: recurrent aetiologies', in *History and heroic tale*, ed. by T. Nybey, I. Pio, P. Sorensen, A. Trammer (Odensee, 1985), 51–96; D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach, A. Breen, 'The laws of the Irish' (*Peritia* 3, 1984), 382–438 (394–412).

14 K. McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in early Irish Literature* (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1991), 30–32, 71–2, 233–55.

15 The oldest extant ms. of the *Etymologiae* was written in Ireland, c. 650; the *Etymologiae* was used by at least ten Irish authors in the seventh century: J.N. Hillgarth, 'Ireland and Spain in the seventh century' (*Peritia* 3, 1984) 1–16 (8–10).

their regard for the Hebrew language, even though of necessity this was in practice largely focused on proper names in scripture. Such preoccupations help to explain the apparently disproportionate weight of commentary Hiberno-Latin writers placed on the opening verses of the first gospel and the visionary, incantatory quality with which they invested Matthew's enumeration of the epochs and generations of Christ's ancestors and his listing of their Hebrew names.

The Irish scholar Ailerán (d. 665) wrote two allegorical expositions of the names in the Matthean genealogy. Unlike Jerome in his commentary on Matthew, where he makes brief historical and technical comments on a select few of the names, Ailerán in the *Interpretatio mystica progenitorum Christi* assumes that every single name, irrespective of the historical significance of its original owner, is of importance because it contains some insight into the identity of Christ. Short scriptural extracts suggested by each etymology illumine the particular facet of Christ and his work of redemption mystically concealed within each ancestral Hebrew name. In the *Moralis explanatio eorumden nominum ab eodem compilata*, Ailerán shows how the believer should conform to each of the aspects of Christ which have already been elucidated through the exposition of each name's hidden meaning.¹⁶

The eighth-century Hiberno-Latin Matthew commentary in Orléans, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 65(62) gives Jerome's brief interpretation for every name in the genealogy but then applies to each name the same mystical interpretation and scriptural texts used by Ailerán in his first treatise. It selects a dozen particular ancestors and, either through interpretation of their names or through some word which particularly evokes their history, shows how they each prophesied Christ: how, in a sense, Christ was present in them, a pilgrim in Abraham, offered up in sacrifice in Isaac, reigning in David.¹⁷ The Hiberno-Latin commentary on Matthew's gospel in Munich Clm 6233 devotes an astonishing 49 folios to the genealogy alone. It too gives a Latin interpretation for every single name, though often departing from those listed under Matthew's [76] gospel in Jerome's *Liber Interpretationis*; it also draws on illustrative texts from the Old and New Testaments, occasionally coinciding with Ailerán's selection.¹⁸ Detailed commentaries on the Matthean genealogy also appear in the great

16 *Patrologia Latina* 80, 327–42. The Priscillian prologues to the gospels have an arcane interpretation of the Matthean genealogy; there is a good and probably early text preserved in a group of Insular gospel books, including the Book of Kells, see J. Chapman, *Notes on the early history of the Vulgate Gospels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 217–18, 225–26.

17 Unpublished. See Bischoff, 'Turning-points in the history of Latin exegesis', no. 16.1; also no. 17.1, 25 for Hiberno-Latin commentary on Matthew in Vienna 940 which uses Ailerán's work.

18 Unpublished. Bischoff, 'Turning-points', no. 23. I am grateful to Dr Seán Connolly for generous permission to use his transcripts of the Matthean genealogy in Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 6233, fols. 7v–31v, and the Irish Reference Bible New Testament, which he is editing. Clm. 6233, fols. 15v–16v, develops the patristic chain John 1.14; John 12.32; Phil. 2.6–11 (briefly used in Ailerán and Orléans 65(62) under the entry for Booz) into an exposition on the incarnation as the work of the Trinity and on the humanity and divinity of Christ.

eighth-century Hiberno-Latin compilation known as the Irish Reference Bible and in various *collectanea*.¹⁹

Typically, these works give full weight to Matthew's opening phrase, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham', which they see as containing the whole genealogy and even encapsulating the entire gospel. The individual words of the title are probed: *Liber*, simultaneously meaning a book, the freeing of souls, and the sonship revealed in Christ's divine and human descent. The genealogy itself is treated as a book. As the *Liber genesis* described the creation of heaven and earth and the beginning of corruptibility, Matthew's *Liber generationis* describes re-creation and the beginning of incorruptibility; it is compared with the *Liber generationis* of Adam (Genesis 5.1) to show Christ as the Second Adam; it is likened to the book of the Law given to Moses, a memoria of the beginnings of salvation which is in Christ. Following both Jerome and Augustine, Matthew's *Liber generationis* is seen as the direct fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 53.8, recalled in Acts 8.33, 'Who shall declare his generation?'²⁰ The Matthew commentary in Orléans 65(62) asks why Matthew called his work 'the book of the generation' when in fact it records generations and when the genealogy is only one small part of his gospel. The answer is that the genealogy describes only one generating and may properly be called the book of Jesus Christ; this is the sealed book which the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel and John the Apostle in the Apocalypse commemorate.²¹

The second part of the title of the *Liber generationis* consists of the sacred names, Jesus Christ, which are given very great emphasis in Hiberno-Latin exegesis. They are related to Christ's divinity and humanity respectively; each name is given in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, as in Isidore's *Etymologiae*. The scriptural exposition of the title *Christus* (the Anointed One) contains an entire Christology. Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil (chrism) thereby prefiguring Christ's spiritual anointing at his incarnation, though only he combines all three orders. At his anointing he is revealed as man but remains never less than the Father in his divinity.²² The third part of the genealogy's title describes Christ as 'the son of David, the son of Abraham'. A variety of scriptural texts is cited to show that Abraham and David had been divinely promised that

19 'Irish Reference Bible', unpublished, Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 11561, fols. 137v–140. *Collectanea* probably written in centres of Irish influence on the continent: Angers 55 and Munich Clm. 14426 in *Scriptores Hiberniae minores 1*, ed. by R. McNally (*Corpus Christianorum* 108 B, Turnholt: Brepols, 1973), 146–49, 225–30.

20 Irish Reference Bible, fol. 137v, Munich Clm. 6233, fols. 7v–8, Angers 55, fol. 10v; cf. R. McNally, 'Der irische *Liber de numeris*: eine Quellenanalyse des ps-isidorischen *Liber de numeris*' (Dissertation, Munich, 1957), 129, for multiple interpretations of *liber*.

21 Isaiah 29.11, Ezekiel 2.9, Revelation 5.1.

22 Irish Reference Bible, fol. 138. Angers 55, like Irenaeus, relates the incarnational image of anointing to the Trinity: the Father anoints, the Holy Spirit is the ointment (chrism), the Son is the Anointed One (Christus): *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* (ed. by McNally), 1, 148.

Christ would come 'according to the flesh' (Psalms 131.11; Genesis 22.18; Galatians 3.15). The commentaries then work through the list of Christ's ancestors and the spiritual significance of their Hebrew names, as already described, and often comment on the significance of the number of eras and generations they span. The epochs before, under, and after the Law, for example, are related to Abraham, David, and Christ yet shown to be all one period, just as there is one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christ's royal descent, traced by Matthew through David's son Solomon, is perfectly reconciled with his descent traced by Luke through the priestly line of David's son Nathan.

The genealogy's long recapitulation of Christ's identity with his people Israel and the continuity of their history under divine providence reaches a dramatic climax in the disclosure that the last name in the list of ancestral names, Joseph, was not the father of Christ. Commentators emphasise that Mary assumed the lineage of her husband and that they were both from the same tribe, and note her blood relationship to the tribe of [77] Aaron, but the account of how the Son of God took his humanity from his virgin mother represents a radical dislocation in history. The account of the virginal conception and incarnation of Christ in Matthew 1.18–25 is therefore the essential accompaniment to the genealogy in revealing the divine as well as the human identity of the prophesied Davidic Messiah, Christ. The Irish Reference Bible, like Irenaeus, draws attention to the fact that the opening of Matthew's account of the incarnation at 1.18 does not use the name Jesus, a name yet to be supplied by the angel (v. 21), but *Christi autem generatio sic erat*. Glossing the same line, the Matthew commentary in Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6233 quotes John 1.14 to identify the Christ of the genealogy with the Word made flesh.²³

In the light of this tradition, the layout of Insular gospel books seems less arbitrary. Continental gospel books which are marked for Roman lections treat the phrase *Christi autem generatio sic erat* as the conclusion of the genealogy and they begin the account of the incarnation with the next words of v. 18, *Cum esset desponsata mater eius Maria Joseph*. In embellishing the name of Christ at precisely this moment in Matthew's text, however, and in separating the *chi-rho* from the foregoing account of the genealogy, Insular gospel books signify in a single word the Word incarnate and thereby mark the pivotal point of history and redemption.

In the St Gall Gospels an elaborate cross-carpet page faces the whole-page *chi-rho*, separating it from the genealogy.²⁴ The only cross-carpet page in the Book of Kells, now fol. 33r, may also have been positioned originally to face the *chi-rho* on fol. 34r in a glorious double opening. The Insular development of the *chi-rho*

23 Fols. 31r–32. Ps-Jerome, *Expositio in iv evangelia*, gives the etymology of Christus in glossing the line Matthew 1.18 (Patrologia Latina 30), 535.

24 St Gall, Stiftsbibl., Cod. 51, ps. 6–7; J. J. G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts 6th to the 9th century* (London: Harvey Miller, 1978), cat. 44, pl. 200–201.

at Matthew 1.18 to rival and surpass the decoration of the gospel incipit and the treatment of the intervening text of the genealogy as a visual unit led to the formal separation of these two elements, to the treatment of the genealogy as an introductory book and Matthew 1.18 as the second or proper opening of the gospel. In the Lindisfarne Gospels the rubric on the opening page of Matthew's gospel, fol. 27r, reads *incipit evangelii genealogia mathei*. Only the opening words of the gospel, which also form the title-board of the genealogy, are displayed on the page, *Liber generationis Ihu Xpi filii David filii Abraham* (Plate 3.2). The genealogy which immediately follows overleaf, laid out in columns, is entirely contained within the double opening fols. 27v–28r. Although fol. 28v is blank, the *chi-rho* and v. 18 is reserved for a whole-page display on fol. 29r which bears the rubric, *Incipit evangelium secundum matheu* (Plate 3.3).²⁵ The process of separation of genealogy and *chi-rho* is taken even further in the Cutbercht Gospels. The genealogy is followed, not preceded, by a portrait of Matthew who faces the decorated opening of the canon tables, and only after their completion (fols. 18v–21v) does the text of Matthew's gospel resume at v. 18 with the *chi-rho* and panelled continuation lettering on fol. 22 which carries the superscription: *Incipit evangelium secdm mattheum*.²⁶ In the pocket-sized ninth-century MacDurnan Gospels the genealogy is decoratively set out and framed and then followed by a portrait of the evangelist facing the *chi-rho* at Matthew 1.18 which is treated more lavishly than any gospel opening in the book.²⁷

The opening gospel sequence in the Book of Kells (fols. 28v–34r) marks the culmination of the Insular development of isolating ever fewer words more elaborately at Matthew 1.1 and 18, distorting letter-forms and veiling them with clouds of ornament which render them illegible to those who do not know what they seek. In a double opening ornamented with the density of carpet pages (Plates 3.4 and 3.5) a portrait page faces the [78] gospel incipit, which is reduced to the first two words, *Liber generationis* (fols. 28v–29r). The ancestral names of the genealogy are enrolled in a continuous majuscule text which is arranged without spacing or punctuation in short lines filling two columns on each of the four following pages (fols. 29v–31r). The centre margin of each page is formed by the shaft of a cross; rounded terminals meet with the rectangular frame at its four cardinal points (Figure 3.1). After the emphatic pause of a blank opening, fols. 31v–32r, there are two whole-page illustrations before the gospel text is resumed at v. 18. A scene of Christ enthroned is now positioned opposite a cross-carpet

25 London, British Lib. Cotton MS Nero D.IV; Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 9, pl. 39, 44.

26 Vienna, Nationalbibl., Cod. 1224, fols. 17v–18; Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 37, pl. 181–82. The Cadmug Gospels, Fulda, Landesbibl., Bonif. 3, also has *incipit evange. s. matheu* above the *chi-rho*. McGurk, 'The Irish pocket Gospel Book', 257–58.

27 London, Lambeth Palace Lib., MS 1370, fols. 4v–5; Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 70, pl. 321–22, 326. The Gospels of Mael Brigte, London, British Lib. Harley MS 1802 (Armagh, 1138) ends the genealogy with the word *finis* and inserts a Hebrew glossary and some ten folios of prefatory material between Matthew 1.17 and the *chi-rho*.







Plate 3.4 The Book of Kells. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 58, fol. 28v.



Plate 3.5 The Book of Kells. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 58, fol. 29r.

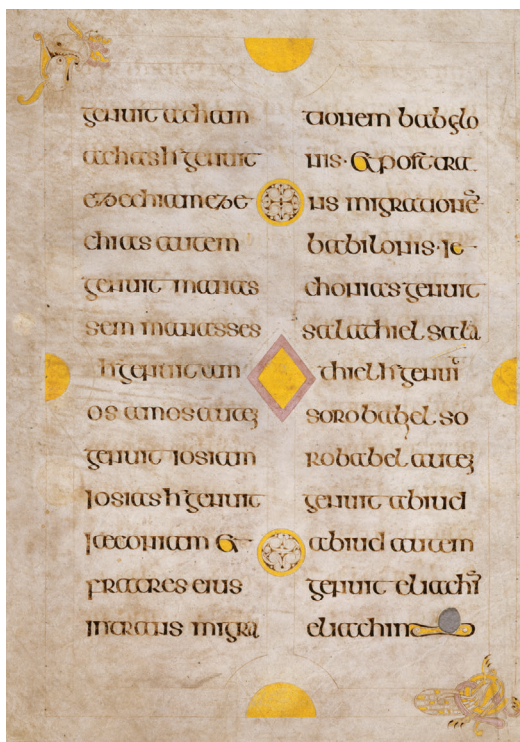


Figure 3.1 The Book of Kells. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 58, fol. 30v.

page (fols. 32v–33r); following a blank verso the *chi-rho* appears at last on fol. 34r sweeping across the entire page with a tiny abbreviated *autem generatio* at its foot (Plate 3.1).²⁸ Several features which distinguish the sequence in Kells cannot be accounted for solely in terms of its decorative inventiveness in developing Insular gospel book conventions but may in part be explained as a more detailed and sustained visual exegesis of the text.

Imago hominis

Following a prefatory four-symbols page, the theme of the evangelist symbols is immediately resumed in the framed portrait of a magisterial figure which stands opposite the opening of Matthew's gospel, fols. 28v–29r (Plates 3.4 and 3.5).

²⁸ The sequence is reproduced in colour in F. Henry, *The Book of Kells* (London; Thames & Hudson, 1974, repr. 1988), pl. 20–29.



Figure 3.2 The Book of Armagh. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 52, fol. 68v.

There are miniature depictions of the heads of a calf and an eagle on the arms of the throne behind this figure and two lion heads symmetrically surmount the back of the throne. The omission of Matthew's own symbol, the man, from the group differentiates the image from the standing portrait of St Mark surrounded by tiny figures of all four evangelist symbols in the St Gall Gospels p. 78, which combines the function of a four-symbols page and an author portrait to show the individual gospel as part of a fourfold single gospel.²⁹ The figure in Kells, fol. 28v, may allude both to the evangelist Matthew and to his symbol. The iconography bears some comparison with the individual symbols of calf and eagle which preface the gospels of Luke and John respectively in the Book of Armagh: each has small roundel faces of the remaining *three* symbols on its wings (Figure 3.2).³⁰

²⁹ Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 44, pl. 207.

³⁰ Dublin, Trinity College Lib., MS 52, fols. 68v, 90. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 53, pl. 226. The creatures have four wings, as in Ezekiel's vision; Gregory the Great said of these creatures that each had the faces of all four because the four evangelists' knowledge of Christ is the same in one as simultaneously in the four: *Sancti Gregorii Magni. Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, ed. by M. Adriaen (Corpus Christianorum 142, Turnholt: Brepols, 1971) Hom. 3.

Fol. 28v in the Book of Kells is not a conventional evangelist portrait but its association of the evangelist symbols and the Matthean genealogy is not unique in Insular manuscripts. It may reflect the standard practice in Hiberno-Latin gospel commentaries of placing an introductory discussion of the harmony of the four evangelists before the detailed consideration of the harmony concealed within the Matthean genealogy, which is also treated as a prefatory text to Matthew's gospel. Augustine's work on Gospel harmony combines discussion of the four beasts and the Matthean genealogy, as already noted, and Jerome's influential commentary on Matthew's gospel is prefaced by an exposition of the four beasts as a figure of the harmony of the four gospels. This text, known by its opening words, *Plures fuisse*, serves as a preface in many gospel books. An idiosyncratic form of expression sometimes masks Hiberno-Latin continuity with patristic exegesis.³¹ The same may perhaps be argued for certain features of Insular iconography. In the MacDurnan Gospels, for example, three of the gospels are prefaced by author portraits but a four-symbols page faces the *Liber generationis* and the standing portrait of Matthew follows the genealogy. In the Book of Armagh three of the gospels are prefaced by drawings of their appropriate evangelist symbols but Matthew's gospel is instead preceded by a four-symbols page: all four [79] symbols look right, towards the facing page on which the entire Matthean genealogy is set out in columns (fols. 32–33).³²

In Ezekiel's vision, each of the four beasts has the aspect of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle; in the Apocalyptic vision (Revelation 4.7), four separate creatures attend the divine throne. In the Trier Gospels the bizarre image which faces the *Novum opus* (fols. 5v–6r) shows a standing human figure with the limbs of lion, calf, and eagle suspended from his waist, as though to visualise both the tetramorphic quality of each of the four living creatures of Ezekiel's vision and the prophet's obscure remark that 'there was the likeness (*similitudo*) of a man in them' (Ezekiel 1.5). The symbolic creature of Matthew is not shown in the same way as the other three but is implied in the central figure of the man. Whereas the four-symbols frontispiece in Trier is inscribed with the names of the four creatures who are displayed around the Cross, as though around the divine throne (*homo, leo, vitulus, aquila*), the tetramorph on fol. 5v is inscribed with the names of the four evangelists. The surviving pictures which preface the gospels of Mark and Luke in the Trier Gospels show author portraits accompanied by their symbolic beasts and the rubric, *incipit evangelium secundum marcum/lucam*, but the portrait page facing Matthew's gospel opening shows a figure holding a book and standing before a throne within an inscribed cruciform frame. The standing author portrait of Matthew in the Cadmug Gospels is inscribed *Imago Mathei*. The word *imago* elsewhere accompanies the *symbols* of the evangelists, both in

31 Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 1, 2; Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum* (Corpus Christianorum 77, Turnholt: Brepols, 1969), 1–4.

32 Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 70, pl. 321–22, 325–26 (MacDurnan Gospels, London, Lambeth Palace Lib., 1370, fols. 1v–2, 4v–5); cat. 53, pl. 230.

the tradition of the wingless ‘terrestrial’ type of symbol in the Echternach Gospels and the London-Cambridge Gospels and in the tradition of winged symbols with haloes and books which accompany the four evangelist portraits in the Lindisfarne Gospels. In both types Matthew’s symbol is inscribed *imago hominis*. The figure of the man facing the opening of the genealogy in the Trier Gospels (fol. 19v) is inscribed *imago sci mathei euang* and may therefore suggest both the heavenly symbol and the earthly author of the gospel which particularly reveals the humanity of Christ in its opening text of the genealogy and Incarnation.³³ The Echternach Gospels depicts individual scenes of the lion, calf and eagle before the gospels of Mark, Luke and John respectively. Before the gospel of Matthew, however, the ambiguous symbol of the man is enthroned like an evangelist at the centre of a quadripartite frame in which the Cross is strongly figured (Plate 3.6). His open book shows seals (cf. Revelation 5.1) and the title of the genealogy: *liber generationis ihu xpi*. The figure, inscribed *imago hominis*, is placed opposite the columned page containing the whole of Matthew’s genealogy and may allude to the humanity of Christ about to be revealed in the text, as in the Incarnation.³⁴

The Book of Kells is recognizably part of this Insular tradition of iconographic experiment with images of the evangelists and their symbols, particularly at the opening of Matthew’s gospel, which argues an interest in their meaning as well as in their value in decoratively marking the entrance to the sacred text. The additional details and greatly extended scale of illustration in Kells makes it possible to suggest more closely its parallels with a reading of the text widely attested in Insular exegesis.

The central figure in the Kells portrait on fol. 28v (Plate 3.4) holds a book but conceals his right hand within his robe. George Henderson regards this as a significant gesture indicating Christ ‘in the bosom of the Father’ (meaning the hidden counsels of God as revealed in Christ at the incarnation).³⁵ The Old Testament image of the hand or arm of the Lord is already applied to Christ in the gospels. St John describes the incarnate [80] Christ as the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy, ‘To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ (John 12.38; Isaiah 53.1). In exegesis the image occurs in contexts relevant to Matthew’s gospel opening and its traditional association with the harmony of the gospels figured in the visions of the four beasts. The detailed exposition of the names and titles of the Son of God in Isidore’s *Etymologiae* includes the names Christ, Jesus, and Emmanuel but also describes him as *manus Dei*: ‘He is the hand of God because all things were made through him [cf. John 1.3]. In this sense, and bearing in mind the result of his work of creation – for he formed all creatures – he is also called the right hand’.

33 Trier, Domschatz, Cod. 61: Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 26, pl. 110–14. N. Netzer, *Cultural interplay in the eighth century: the Trier Gospels and the making of a scriptorium at Echternach* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 90–111, pl. 1–4, 19–21 for pictures and facing texts.

34 Paris, Bibl. Nat., lat. 9389, fol. 18v: Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 11, pl. 54. Werckmeister, *Irish-northumbrian Buchmalerei*, 7–53.

35 *From Durrow to Kells*, 155–59, referring particularly to Revelation 4 and 5.



Plate 3.6 The Echternach Gospels. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). MS lat. 9389, fol. 18v.

Immediately before this identification of the incarnate Christ with the Creator Logos, Isidore refers to the account of the incarnation in Philippeans 2. 6–7, ‘even when adopting the form of a slave, he demonstrated that he possessed in his person the image and immense greatness of the Father’.³⁶

Gregory the Great had already used the combination of John 1.3 and Philippeans 2.6–7 in describing the incarnation specifically in the context of expounding Ezekiel’s vision of the four living creatures and its prefiguring of the fourfold gospel in which Christ’s incarnation was to be revealed. Gregory interprets Ezekiel’s enigmatic observation that the four creatures ‘had the likeness of a man’ (Ezekiel 1.5) as a revelation of Christ who ‘took upon himself the form of a slave and was made in the likeness of men’ (*in similitudinem hominum factus*) (Philippeans 2.7). This amplifies Gregory’s gloss on Ezekiel’s assertion that his vision was divinely inspired, that ‘the Hand of the Lord was upon him’ (Ezekiel 1.3). Gregory explains,

And the Hand or Arm of the Lord signifies the Son, for by him all things were made. [...] For the Hand of the Lord which through divine authority is begotten, not made, is [here] made from humanity, that it may cleanse the wounds of the human race. Therefore the prophet recognized the incarnation of the only-begotten when he saw the Hand of the Lord above him.³⁷

Knowledge of this exegetical tradition confirms the initial impression that the figure on fol. 28v in the Book of Kells is not simply a portrait of Matthew or his symbol but a Christ-bearing image, a revelation of the incarnation and humanity of the Son of God prophesied in Ezekiel’s vision and about to be announced in Matthew’s gospel.

Bede’s exposition of the vision of the four beasts as described in Revelation 4.7 draws on yet another of Christ’s traditional titles, ‘the lion of Judah’ (cf. Genesis 49.9). Following Augustine, Bede, like several Hiberno-Latin commentators on Matthew’s gospel, shows that Matthew revealed the kingly character of Christ in the account of Christ’s human descent from the royal line of David and in the account of the Magi seeking ‘the king of the Jews’ (Matthew 2.2).³⁸ In the mysterious visionary tableau described in Revelation 5.17, ‘the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David’, is alone found worthy to take the sealed book from the right hand of the Almighty who is enthroned among the four beasts. Bede

³⁶ *Etymologiae*, 7.2.

³⁷ *The Homilies of St Gregory the Great on the Book of Ezekiel*, trans. by T. Gray (Etna, CA Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1990), Hom. 2, 24.

³⁸ *De consensu evangelistarum* 2.6; repeated in Augustine’s Tractates on John’s gospel: *In Johannis evangelium*, ed. by R. Willems (Corpus Christianorum 36, Turnholt: Brepols, 1954), 36.5. Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, c. 710–16 (Patrologia Latina 93), 144 and *In Lucae evangelium expositio* (ed. D. Hurst, Corpus Christianorum 120, Turnholt: Brepols 1960), 7–10.

interprets the right hand as Christ in his divinity, the book as the mysteries of scripture, sealed until opened at his Incarnation: it is the sealed book prophesied by Isaiah and Ezekiel:

the Son of Man is said to have taken the book from the right hand of God, namely the economy of the Incarnation, appointed by the Father and by Himself, in that He is God; because both dwell with the Holy Spirit upon the throne. For Christ [. . .] is also in His deity the right hand of the Father.³⁹

The phrase ‘Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed’ [81] (Revelation 5.5) is seen as Christ overcoming death at his Passion. Christ is the second person of the triune Godhead who ordains the incarnation and he is the incarnate Lord. Bede therefore sees Christ *simultaneously* in the figure enthroned among the four beasts and in the right hand of that figure. Christ at his Incarnation is figured in the book, Christ at his Passion is the lion that takes the book from the divine hand. The book, the right hand, the lion of Judah are among the traditional names of Christ: each reveals something of Christ’s identity which cannot be circumscribed by any image.

The solemn vision in the Book of Kells (fol. 28v) does not directly illustrate the apocalyptic scene of the lion of Judah receiving the book as Carolingian Touronian bibles were to do. Instead, its details act as pictorial equivalents of rhetorical figures in exegesis to expound the uninscribed *imago hominis*. By its positioning in the manuscript the image might be expected to represent Matthew or his symbol, the man, but various accompanying features – the halo inset with three small triangles, the concealed right hand and the book, the throne and the beasts – also conceal clues to the identity of Christ as revealed in Matthew’s gospel opening and traditionally expounded in exegesis of that text. The picture also draws on the ancient Mediterranean iconographic motif of two lions as the flanking attendants or guardians of images of divinity and majesty; the two confronted lions above the throne acclaim the central figure by touching him with their tongues.⁴⁰

Small depictions of peacocks, vines and fish, images of Mediterranean origin and Christological association, seed the gospel text and illustrations in the Book

39 *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, Patrologia Latina 93, 145. *The exposition of the Apocalypse by the Venerable Bede*, trans. by E. Marshall (Oxford and London, 1878) 5. 5–7 ps. 34–36; the explanation concerning the lion of Judah and the Passion is repeated in Bede’s treatise on rhetorical figures, *De schematibus et tropis*. It was often used by Augustine, e.g. in *De doctrina christiana* 3. 35–36 (ed. by J. Martin, *Corpus Christianorum* 32, Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), 97–98.

40 Cf. Paris, Bibl. Nat., lat. 12168, fol. Cb, c. 770: P. Lasko, *The kingdom of the Franks* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), pl. 112. Two pairs of confronted lions flank and touch with their tongues the Tree of Life and the Cross which is symbolically portrayed beneath an arch with a lozenge at its centre and the *nomina sacra*, *Xpi Ihu*. Cf. Kells, fol. 114r.

of Kells. Similarly, small lions and non-figural motifs – the equilateral, stepped cross, the *chi* and the lozenge – repeatedly embellish the sacred page but may also function as concealed allusions to Christ, just as the Hebrew names in the literal text of the genealogy render up their testimony to Christ's identity when interpreted spiritually. The role of such motifs in pages relevant to the present discussion may be briefly illustrated.

Magnifying the name

Nativitas Xpi, the opening words of the *breves causae* summarising Matthew's gospel, are magnified and embellished on an unparalleled scale in the prefatory pages of the Book of Kells and face a figural image of the mystery of the incarnation which is without precedent in Insular gospel books (fols. 7v–8r). The lion finial on the throne of Mary and the Christ child (Plate 3.7) may allude to the throne of David and Christ's royal descent from the tribe of Judah, the jewelled Cross beneath the throne to his death and conquest of death. The Virgin holds the child in a tender human gesture but she is also depicted as a powerful icon of the Mother of God, the three crosses in her halo signifying the Incarnation as the work of the Trinity. The human and divine sonship of Christ are further suggested in the conspicuous double gesture of the unhaloed child who takes his human mother's right hand in his and points to the lozenge-shaped jewel on her breast. This rhomboid brooch with emphasised cardinal points recalls the tradition of cosmic schemata, which depicted the *tetragonus mundus*, and may here serve to show that the incarnate Christ, born of Mary, is the divine Creator.⁴¹ A tiny lozenge is also at the centre of the letter *chi* of Christ's title in the opening words of the facing text, *Nativitas Xpi*, and at the centre of each cross-framed page listing the names of his ancestors (Figure 3.1). At the end of the genealogy which prepares for the aniconic rather than figural [82] revelation of Christ's divine as well as human identity at his Incarnation, the enormously magnified *chi* of the name of Christ at 1.18 on fol. 34r has the cosmological symbol of the lozenge as well as the Cross emblazoned at its centre (Plate 3.1).

Facing the *imago hominis* flanked by two lions on fol. 28v, an image in which Christ is figured, is the opening of the genealogy (Plate 3.5). A man extends a book towards the magnified words *Liber generationis*, probably articulating Isaiah's question, 'Who shall declare his generation?'⁴² At first unnoticed among the

41 Literature on cosmic schemata and the lozenge motif discussed by J. O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular traditions on the Evangelists: exegesis and iconography', in *Quaestiones de Romano-Barbarica* 1, ed. by A.M. Fuiselli Fadda and É. Ó Carragáin, Rome, 1998. For Insular examples of the lozenge used in other media, see H. Richardson, 'Number and symbol in early Christian Irish art', *Journal of Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 114 (1984), 1–30.

42 Isaiah 53. 8. The Anglo-Saxon Boulogne Gospels, Boulogne, Bibl. mun. MS 11, fol. 56, shows the figures of Isaiah and John the Baptist with prophetic scrolls alongside the opening words of Mark's



Plate 3.7 The Book of Kells. Virgin and Child. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 58, fol. 7v.

rich ornament enshrining the title of the genealogy, is another pair of small confronted lions at the top of the initial letter. Their protruding tongues cross to form a perfect curved letter *chi*, declaring Christ's presence concealed in the book of generation. At the end of the genealogy the *chi* reappears on fol. 34 like an *inclusio* symbol on a gigantic scale, marking the moment when the long-figured Christ becomes incarnate: *Xpi (autem) generatio*. The device may be compared with the much more modest insertion of a tiny upright form of the *chi-rho* above the *Liber generationis* in the Augsburg Gospels, fol. 16, and of a small upright *chi-rho* and the sacred names *ih̄s xps* above the rubric *Incipit euangelii genealogia mathei* on the *Liber generationis* page of the Lindisfarne Gospels (Plate 3.2)⁴³ The two pairs of confronted lion-heads at each of the cardinal points of the cross-carpet page, which probably once faced the *chi-rho* in the Book of Kells, again honour his royal title. The double-barred form of the cross refers to the title board and Pilate's inscription *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum*. Irish exegetes insert the title *Christus* into the gospel text of the inscription which they interpret as showing his kingship of all believers. Similarly, in the Book of Kells fol. 124, the six words immediately following the description of the *titulus* in Matthew's account of the Crucifixion are dramatically framed and displayed within a large letter *chi* and the title *xpi* is inserted into the gospel text: *Tunc crucifixerant xpi cum eo duos latrones* (Matthew 27.38). Hiberno-Latin interest in the etymology of Hebrew names in Latin and even Greek, and particularly in giving the names Jesus Christ in all three sacred languages 'which, as Jerome says, Christ consecrated in the inscription of the Cross' is nowhere more evident than in exegesis of the names of Christ and his Hebrew ancestors in the Matthean genealogy.⁴⁴

In addition to the decoration of the opening sequence and related pages with motifs which may also function as a visual evocation of the names of Christ, the Matthean genealogy and the *chi-rho* are amplified by two other sequences in the Book of Kells, the Lucan genealogy and the opening of John's gospel. The magnificent five-page layout of the genealogy which follows Luke's account of Christ's baptism (fols. 200r–202r) is utterly different from that in Matthew, as though to stress the differences in their literal texts. Small figural additions to Luke's list of ancestral names, however, point to a spiritual interpretation of the underlying meaning which is entirely complementary to that of Matthew's genealogy.

gospel and pointing up to Christ whom they announced: E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976) cat. 44, pl. 150.

43 Now Augsburg, Universitätsbibl. Cod. 1.2.4° 2, fols. 16–16v: Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 24, pl. 123–4; cat. 44, pl. 39. The Barberini Gospels, Rome, Vatican, Bibl. Apostolica, Barberini Lat. 570, fol. 18 has a somewhat effete variant of the Kells lion-heads motif transposed to the decoration of the *chi-rho*: *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 36, pl. 170.

44 *Cummian's letter De controversia paschale* (ed. by Walsh and Ó Cróinín), 57; R. McNally, 'The *Tres Lingua Sacrae* in early Irish Bible exegesis' (*Theological Studies* 19, 1958), 395–403 for examples of the *titulus* rendered *Hic est Jesus Christus Rex Iudeorum* and *Hic est Salvator unctus (Christus) Rex Confessorum*.

In the Lucan genealogy and *breves causae* are small depictions of Luke's symbol, the sacrificial calf, and other allusions to the Old Covenant priesthood, an image which opens the text of Luke's gospel as a prelude to his account of the Incarnation of Christ as the new priesthood and Temple. The climax of the Lucan priestly genealogy in Kells is a whole-page visual exegesis of the new Temple. It is at once the incarnate body of 'Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit', as the framed and ornamented text of Luke 4.1 on the facing page proclaims (fols. 202v–203r), and it is his body the Church, built of the living stones of the faithful who are the spiritual descendants of Christ's human ancestors enumerated in the genealogy.⁴⁵ The first word in the gospel [83] text immediately after the genealogy is crucial: in Matthew 1.18 it is the title Christ, in Luke 4.1 it is the name Jesus. The phrase *Jesus autem spiritu sancto*, with the abbreviated *Ihs* magnified and rendered as a mysterious cipher, occupies the entire page facing the image of the Temple. The layout and decoration of the Matthean and Lucan genealogies in Kells, which are by far the largest decorated sequences in the manuscript, highlight features found in contemporary Insular exegesis of the texts. The two genealogical sequences demonstrate the harmony of the gospels. Together they reveal the incarnate Christ as king and priest, as the Davidic Messiah and Son of God. Together they expound the significance of his name and title, Jesus Christ.

The use of the *chi*-Cross and lozenge at Matthew 1.18 in Kells has here been discussed in terms of an exegetical theme by no means confined to Irenaeus but present in Hiberno-Latin commentaries on Matthew, namely the application of the Christology of John's gospel opening to explain that the Christ descended from human ancestors and born of Mary is the Son of God, the Word made flesh. John's opening words, *In principio erat verbum*, recall the opening of the account of creation in Genesis; the famous vignettes of creatures from earth, air and water concealed within the decoration of the cosmic *chi* on fol. 34 reveal the Word made known not only in his incarnation but in his divine work of creation. While the *chi* is a recurring, and sometimes tiny or concealed, motif in the manuscript, the sign of the cosmological *chi*-Cross, dominates only one other whole page in the Book of Kells in a context which closely harmonises with its use at Matthew 1.18, namely fol. 290v which prefaces John's gospel. It is the only four-symbols page in Insular art to be structured on a diagonal Cross (Plate 3.8).

Hiberno-Latin commentaries on Matthew are customarily prefaced, like Jerome's commentary, by an exposition on the harmony of the four gospels in revealing Christ. Like Jerome they cite scriptural illustrations of the divine authority underlying the number four, particularly the four beasts in the visions of Ezekiel and St John. But they also develop another strand in the patristic tradition by referring, like Irenaeus, to the testimony of the fourfold nature of all creation in revealing the divine order and measure of its Creator. The four seasons, cardinal

45 For the image of the Temple as related to the genealogy: J. O'Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: the Lucan genealogy', in *The Book of Kells* (ed. by O'Mahony), 344–97.



Plate 3.8 The Book of Kells. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 58, fol. 290v.

directions, elements, properties and humours are listed and paired with the four gospels to expound, often very arcanelly, characteristic features of each gospel and hence of Christ and redemption. The insistent listing of these cosmic quaternities finds some visual parallel in the distinctively Insular development of the iconography of the four-symbols page which places the four heavenly creatures (rather than the four earthbound evangelists) in the four quarters of a quadripartite design.⁴⁶

The four-symbols page acts as a frontispiece to some Insular gospel books, or occasionally substitutes for the symbol or evangelist picture prefacing Matthew. In the Lichfield Gospels the image of the four symbols around a Cross may have prefaced each gospel.⁴⁷ The theme of gospel harmony reaches a crescendo in the Book of Kells. Most obviously this is achieved through the repeated motif of the four evangelist symbols, depicted with prodigious variety, who animate the canon tables displaying the concordant passages of the four gospels and who are shown in three surviving four-symbols pages placed before individual gospels.

It has been argued here that gospel harmony in the Book of Kells, as in patristic and Insular exegesis, is demonstrated also in the spiritual interpretation of paradoxes and apparent discrepancies of the gospel text itself, for which the Matthean genealogy acts [84] as a synecdoche. All its mysteries point to Christ. The strong visual similarity between the *chi*-Cross at Matthew 1.18 and that in the four-symbols page before John's gospel sustains that exegesis. On fol. 290v the extension of the four arms of the *chi*-Cross to the four corners of the frame, the placing of the four evangelist symbols at its cardinal points, and the dominance of the lozenge-shaped symbol of the *tetragonus mundus* at its centre, present in abstract terms the idea of Christ the Creator-Logos revealed throughout his fourfold world as in his fourfold Gospel.

Like the picture facing the opening words of Matthew's gospel, the picture facing John's opening words (fols. 291v–292r) is not a conventional author portrait of the evangelist but evokes images of Christ embodied in the gospel. A figure in human form is partly concealed beneath the decorated area of the page, his youthful haloed head, hands, and feet projecting at the four cardinal points of the frame so that he is identified both with the cruciform structure undergirding all creation and with the sacred page itself, but is also partly hidden by both. Overlaying this is a majestically haloed and enthroned figure. In his right hand he holds a pen poised above an inkwell and raises a book inscribed with a *chi* within a lozenge.⁴⁸ The layered image evokes the Word as the creator of the universe and of the sacred text.

46 R. McNally, 'The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition', in *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff*, ed. by A. Hiergemann (Stuttgart, 1971), 111–22; additional Hiberno-Latin texts and four-symbols page iconography: J. O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular traditions on the Evangelists: exegesis and iconography'.

47 Four-symbols pages as frontispieces in Book of Durrow, Trier Gospels, MacDurnan Gospels; as preface to Matthew in the Book of Armagh, as preface to individual gospel in Lichfield Gospels: Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, pl. 13, 114, 325, 230, 81.

48 Werckmeister, *Irisch-northumbrische Buchmalerei*, 101–47.

In the Book of Kells the image of the author on fol. 291v is in the middle of a three-page sequence, positioned between a stylised and symbolic rendering of John's apocalyptic vision of the four beasts, which conceals Christ's name in the *chi*-Cross, and the opening words of John's gospel in which Christ's name, as the Word, *Verbum*, is magnified yet obscured by the ornament. The decorative veiling of the sacred text itself offers a metaphor of the art of spiritual reading to discern the meaning hidden within the literal letter of the fourfold Gospel. Exegeses had long compared the process to that of seeing the Creator hidden in his creation and apprehending his divinity clothed in human flesh. The strong visual connection between the *chi*-Cross marking Matthew 1.18 on fol. 34 and the *chi*-Cross of the four-symbols page prefacing John's gospel on fol. 190v points to the harmony of the fourfold gospel, expounded in patristic and Insular exegesis, which underlies the apparently divergent openings of Matthew and John. Spiritually interpreted, the *chi* denotes Christ's human generation and birth *and* the divine Logos by whom all things were made. The entire Gospel is subsumed in this sign. The Word imaged through a single word, indeed, a single letter, contains all other names of Christ.

PATRISTIC AND INSULAR TRADITIONS OF THE EVANGELISTS Exegesis and iconography

From the extensive range of Early Christian iconography in the Mediterranean world the theme which dominated Insular gospel book illustration was that of the four gospels themselves, depicted by portraits of their authors and of their symbolic beasts, the man, the lion, the calf and the eagle. The Book of Durrow and the Echternach Gospels preface each of the four gospel texts with a whole-page picture of its appropriate evangelist symbol, a practice followed in the surviving fragments of the gospel book now divided between London, B. L. Cotton Otho C V and Cambridge, C.C.C. 197B.¹ Alternatively, as in the large and splendid Barberini Gospels, the evangelists were each depicted enthroned in whole-page author portraits; the small Irish ‘pocket gospels’ such as the Book of Mulling, the Book of Dimma and the Cadmug Gospels also preface each gospel with a portrait of its author, but usually show them standing.² In the third main type (for example the Lindisfarne, Lichfield, St Gall and Macregol Gospels) evangelist author portraits prefacing individual gospels are each accompanied by the appropriate symbolic beast.³

In addition to these three main types used to preface the four individual gospels within a manuscript, the codex might [49] have a prefatory whole-page depiction of all four symbolic beasts arranged within the quadrants of a Cross (as in the Book of Durrow, the Trier Gospels and the Macdurnan Gospels).⁴ In the Lichfield Gospels it is possible that each of the four gospels originally had such a prefatory four-symbols page, in addition to a portrait of its own evangelist accompanied by his appropriate symbol: the manuscript would thus have had at least eight whole pages, rather than the more usual four or five, devoted to the depiction of the

1 For details and bibliography of manuscripts and reproduction of folios cited see the standard catalogue, J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts 6th to 9th century* (London 1978). Catalogue no. 6, pl. 14–17; cat. 11, pl. 54–6, 59; cat. 12, pl. 57–58.

2 Alexander, *Insular MSS*, cat. 36, pl 174, 176–78; cat. 45, pl 210–212; cat. 48, pl 222, 224; cat. 49, pl 228.

3 Alexander, *Insular MSS*, cat. 9, pl 28–31; cat. 21, pl 80, 82; cat. 44, pl 204–205, 207–208; cat. 54, pl 263–4.

4 Alexander, *Insular MSS*, cat. 6, pl 13; cat. 26, pl 114; cat. 70, pl 325.

evangelists and their symbols. In the Book of Kells, where the range of figural subject matter is much increased, the symbolic beasts extend into the prefatory glossary of Hebrew names and the canon tables and the gospel theme fills thirteen folios: more are almost certainly missing.⁵

The images have been variously interpreted. Pictures of the evangelists may be seen as deriving not only their form but their function from antique author portraits. Evangelists and their symbols could be regarded as forming pictorial captions or title pages for the codex and its four constituent texts or as part of the decorative enrichment of a book that was also an important liturgical object. Some images of the evangelists or their symbolic beasts have been seen as apotropaic guardians of the sacred text; some evangelist portraits, such as the numinous images of St John in the Lindisfarne Gospels fol. 209v and the Book of Kells fol. 291v, may have functioned as devotional icons. Such reasonable and compatible interpretations do not fully explain why the evangelists and their beasts rather than, say, Christ and the apostles, should form the insistently recurring subject matter – usually the only figural images – in books produced in various Insular locations over a long period of time in a society which was open to diverse cultural influences. [50]

Paul Underwood, Herbert Kessler and others long ago argued convincingly that certain images of the evangelists and their symbols in Carolingian gospel books and New Testament frontispieces have an exegetical function and convey theological concepts developed in patristic exegesis on the four gospels which had already to some extent been expressed in pictorial form in Early Christian art.⁶ The problems of similarly discerning theological meaning in the highly stylised or abstract idiom of early Insular art are formidable. Carolingian scholars have the advantage of working with images which have appropriated the modes of Mediterranean representational art much more fully, have a more detailed iconography and are often helpfully annotated with *tituli*. Specific features of the images of gospel harmony which open the gospels in many Carolingian manuscripts have been explained by the standard prefatory materials in which they are positioned, especially Jerome's exegetical text on the four gospels known by its opening words as *Plures fuisse*. Scholars can also point to other evidence of continued Carolingian interest in specific themes in this patristic tradition by referring to Carolingian exegesis, notably the work of Hrabanus Maurus.

5 Fols. 1r–4r, 5r, 27v, 28v, 129v, 290v. Alexander, cat. 58, pl 251, 241; 232, 234–39; 231, 246, 250. Reproduced in colour in Françoise Henry, *The Book of Kells* (London 1974) and in the facsimile, Peter Fox (ed), *The Book of Kells* (Lucerne 1990).

6 Paul Underwood, 'The Fountain of Life in manuscripts of the gospels', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950) 43–138; Herbert Kessler, *The illustrated bibles from Tours* (Princeton 1977) 36–58; Robert M. Walker, 'Illustrations to the Priscillian Prologues in the gospel manuscripts of the Carolingian Ada school', *Art Bulletin* (1948), 1–10.

In 1971 Robert McNally drew attention to a considerable body of earlier, Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the four evangelists.⁷ This literature is extensive and varied. The theme occupies some twenty-two double-columned folios in the late eighth-century compilation known as the Irish Reference Bible; and the text book nature of other works which also had a continuing life in the Carolingian period suggests a wide audience. Studies of Insular gospel book illustration [51] have made relatively little use of the material, however. There are understandable reasons for the scholarly divide, apart from the problems of interpreting early Insular images already referred to. The expanding corpus of exegetical works now thought to have been produced in Ireland in the seventh and eighth centuries and in continental houses influenced by Irish traditions, has survived only in ninth-century and later continental manuscripts with didactic and encyclopaedic functions different from those of illustrated gospel books designed for liturgical or devotional purposes. Technical questions concerning the date, origins and inter-connections of Hiberno-Latin texts containing material on the four gospels remain unresolved; none of these texts has been translated, very few are available in critical editions, important examples remain unpublished.⁸

Also, it would be misleading to imply that this material holds the key to the instant unlocking of the 'meaning' of Insular gospel book illumination. The pictures do not directly illustrate the exegetical texts and their iconographic conventions proceed from other, non-literary sources. What the texts offer the modern cultural historian is the testimony of Irish or Irish-influenced material on subject matter shared with contemporary Insular gospel book images which may reveal something of the mind of the contemporary reader and of the intellectual rather than the artistic milieu in which the images were produced. The texts show both a close familiarity with patristic traditions on the four gospels and a continuing, vigorous exegetical tradition with its own characteristics. The single most influential patristic source is [52] Jerome's *Plures fuisse* text from the introduction to his commentary on Matthew's gospel. A number of the Irish texts also restate or elaborate Jerome's explanation of the Eusebian canon tables of gospel concordances which is set out in his letter *Novum opus*; as will be seen one, two or even all three of these fourth-century works on the harmony of the gospels were included in the prefatory materials of many Insular gospel books. The practice of placing images of all four evangelist symbols in the prefatory

7 Robert McNally, *The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition*, in *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff*, (ed.), A. Hiersemann (Stuttgart 1971), 111–122.

8 Bernard Bischoff, 'Turning-points in the history of Latin exegesis in the early Irish church: AD 650–800' in *Biblical studies: the medieval Irish contribution*, (ed.) Martin McNamara (Dublin 1976), 74–160; J.F. Kelly, 'A catalogue of early medieval Hiberno-Latin biblical commentaries' (I) *Traditio* 44 (1988), 537–71; (II) *Traditio* 45 (1989–90), 393–434. C.D. Wright, 'Hiberno-Latin and Irish-influenced biblical commentaries, florilegia and homily collections' in *The sources of Anglo-Saxon literary culture: a trial version*, (ed.), F.M. Biggs, T.D. Hill, P.E. Szarmach (Binghamton, NY 1990), 87–123.

materials of some Insular gospel books and of positioning the individual evangelists (or their symbols or both) either facing or preceding the enlarged and highly embellished opening words of their respective gospel texts finds some broad parallel in the Irish commentators' development of the patristic technique of characterising the four gospels, both their individual distinctiveness and their unity, through describing their authors and symbolic beasts and by identifying them with the opening lines of their respective gospels. Study of the exegesis may give some insight into what kinds of associations the gospel book images could have prompted for contemporaries.

As a preliminary to such future research the present paper has the limited objective of making the Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition on the four gospels more widely known. It surveys some of the inherited themes and acquired characteristics of the tradition, partly by citing examples not included in Robert McNally's paper, notably from Angers, bibl. mun. ms 55, Munich, Staatsbibliothek Clm 6235 and Munich, Staatsbibliothek Clm 6233. Secondly, it gives an example of how this material might be of use in the study of Insular gospel book illustration.

Images of the four gospels: origins

The two well-known scriptural visions of the four winged living creatures with the features of a man, a lion, a young bull and an eagle do not, in fact, associate them with the gospels at all and provide few of the visual details for the [53] representation of the four evangelists' symbolic beasts in the West. The theological significance of the visions is important, however, for understanding features of the large body of interpretation they attracted. The Old Testament association of four living creatures with the revelation of the divinity of Yahweh in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1: 4–16) is drawn upon in the New Testament as a means of revealing the divinity and majesty of Christ. The series of apocalyptic visions revealed to St John, in which the four living creatures appear around the divine throne amid cosmic portents, forms an extended theophany evoking all creation, encompassing all time and space (Revelation 4–7). The very number of the living creatures is underscored by the four-square nature of the earth, with angels standing at its four corners, holding back the four winds (Revelation 7: 1). Apocalyptic literature was traditionally concerned with the revelation of the secrets of the cosmos and in patristic exegesis the four living creatures were assimilated to existing cosmological concepts in which space, time and matter were seen as part of a fourfold ordering: the four winds or cardinal directions; the four seasons of the year; the elements of earth, air, fire and water; their properties of heat, cold, dryness and moisture; the four humours of the human microcosm. The underlying unity of this quadripartite world was seen to flow from its divine Creator made known in Christ and revealed in the harmonious testimony of the four gospels.

The cosmological significance of the number four was therefore a key to the exegetical identification of the four living creatures as symbols of the four evangelists. This in turn became an important part of the early Church's manifold

attempts to define and defend orthodox teaching against heretics and unbelievers critical of contradictions within scripture and particularly of discrepancies between the various gospels. One solution was that of Tatian who produced a single harmonised version of the various accounts, known as the *Diatessaron*, but the main thrust of Christian apologists was to demonstrate that the four gospels were in fact a single Gospel whose fourfold expression revealed distinctive [54] but entirely complementary facets of the same source and truth.⁹ This was given practical demonstration in concordances, notably the canon tables devised by Eusebius of Caesarea.

The process of defending the four gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – from heretics who would add to their number or detract from their content however, began long before the authoritative inclusion of the four in Jerome's Vulgate or the eloquent resolution of their differences in Augustine's *De consensu evangelistarum*. Already in the work of Irenaeus (c. 131–200) the argument is well-developed: since God the great artificer made all things in due proportion and measure it is fitting that the outward aspect of the Gospel too should be well arranged and harmonised and its fourfold form should 'admit neither an increase nor diminution'. The argument is substantiated both by reference to the self-evident quadripartite formation of the whole universe and then by reference to scripture, particularly the two visions of the four living creatures.¹⁰ The four beasts are mystically interpreted as images of the Son of God. Each is related to one of the four evangelists and the opening passage of each gospel is expounded to reveal a particular facet of the nature of Christ the Creator-Logos. The four gospels are shown to be in harmony with each other and, indeed, to embody the unity of the whole of divine revelation through the four epochs of human history. The fourfold gospel is the unifying pillar and ground of the whole Church (cf. 1 Timothy 3: 15) which extends to the four cardinal points of the world. [55]

Expositions of other scriptural 'fours' became incorporated in a growing body of patristic exegesis on the fourfold Gospel. St Ambrose in *De paradiso* cap. 3, for example, took the Genesis description of the garden of Eden and the four paradisaical rivers flowing from a single source (Genesis 2: 8–14) as an image of the fertile soul watered from a single fount, Christ, by the rivers of the four cardinal virtues, each associated with one of the four ages of the world. The related interpretation of the paradisaical garden as the world-wide Church watered by the four gospels became one of the most constant features of the patristic tradition inherited by Hiberno-Latin writers, appearing in Genesis commentaries and introductions to

9 Helmut Merkel, *Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien: Ihre polemische und apologetische Behandlung in der Alten Kirche bis zu Augustin* (Tübingen 1971), reviewed by Bruce M. Metzger in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973), 132–34.

10 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.8.11; 4.20, 10–11, ed. F. Saguard, *Sources chrétiennes* 34 (Paris 1952). W. Neuss, *Das Buch Ezechiel in Theologie und Kunst bis zum Ende des 12. Jhs.* (Münster i. W. 1912); F. van der Meer, *Maestas Domini. Theophanies de l'Apocalypse dans l'art chrétien* (Rome-Paris 1938).

the gospels. Jerome's introduction to his commentary on Matthew's gospel used the image in defending the four canonical gospels against spurious and heretical versions through expounding the significance of their number and its parallels concealed in Scripture. The four rivers of paradise watering the whole earth are, like the four rings at the corners of the Ark of the Covenant by which the shrine was carried, thus revealed as prefiguring the relationship between the fourfold Gospel and the Church.¹¹

Secondly, Jerome demonstrates the veracity and authority of the four gospels by supplying details about the place and circumstances of their composition and particularly their sources of information: Christ himself in the case of Matthew and John, Peter and Paul in the case of Mark and Luke. Finally, Jerome links and expounds the two scriptural visions of the four living creatures. Characterising each gospel by reference to its opening passage, he relates each of the four faces of the four living creatures in Ezekiel's vision to one of the four evangelists in an order which differs from that of Irenaeus but was to become standard: the first face, that of a man, designates Matthew who opens his Gospel by recounting Christ's human descent, beginning with the words, *Liber generationis Iesu Christi filii David filii Abraham*. The second signifies Mark in whom the voice of [56] the lion in the desert is heard, *Vox clamantis in deserto: parate viam Domini, rectas facite semitas eius*. Luke is prefigured in the third, the face of the calf or ox because his gospel opens with the priest Zacharias; fourthly, the gospel of John soars on the wings of an eagle and hastens to tell of the Word (an allusion to John's opening passage about Christ's divinity, 'In the beginning was the Word . . .,' which Jerome had already quoted in describing the gospel writers).

In his commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, Jerome again parallels the four beasts with their corresponding evangelists and gospel openings, linking the four living creatures in Ezekiel's vision with St John's apocalyptic vision of Christ's majesty and also with a third theophany, Isaiah's vision of the seraphim in the Temple (Isaiah 1: 1–6). Jerome then relates the quadriga of the gospels which go out over all the earth to other sets of four whose diverse components also form a unity: the four elements, the four seasons, the four cardinal virtues, the four directions or parts of the earth.¹²

Gregory's homilies on Ezekiel, delivered in Rome in 593, reinforce Jerome's identification of the four living creatures of Ezekiel's vision with the four evangelists in the order Matthew–man; Mark–lion; Luke–calf; John–eagle and allude to the four gospel openings which explain those pairings:

Nam quia ab humana generatione coepit, iure per hominem Mattheus;
quia per clamorem in deserto, recte per leonem Marcus; quia a sacrificio
exorsus est, bene per vitulum Lucas; quia vero a divinitate Verbi coepit,

11 *Commentariorum in Matheum*, CCSL 77 (1964), 1–4.

12 *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem*, CCSL (1964), *Hom.* IV, 1–3.

digne per aquilam significatur Iohannes, qui dicens, *In principio erat Verbum erat apud Deum*.¹³

Gregory's important contribution to the tradition was to show how each gospel, as epitomised by its opening lines [57] and characterised by its symbolic beast, reveals a particular aspect of the redemption of humanity wrought by Christ who became a man at his birth, a (sacrificial) ox at his death, a (waking) lion at his resurrection and an eagle at his ascension. The image of the four creatures which was applied both to Christ and the four evangelists was also applied at length to the individual spiritual life. Gregory devoted eight homilies to Ezekiel 1 alone, every detail of the physical appearance of the four creatures prompting theological exposition. They had the likeness of a man (1: 5), referring to him who 'took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men' (Philippeans 2: 7). Each of the four creatures had the face of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle because each evangelist shares in the fulness of truth, for example in Matthew's insight into the Incarnation; each had four wings on which to fly and contemplate the incarnate Lord's divinity; they all had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides signifying the four cardinal directions and the corners of the world to which the Gospel is taken and the four cardinal virtues. Ezekiel's enigmatic description of the four living creatures *et aspectus earum et opera, quasi sit rota in medio rotae* (Ezekiel 1: 16) is seen as revelatory of the relationship of the Old Testament containing or prefiguring the New, of the fourfold harmony not of the gospels alone but of the law and the prophets, the evangelists and the apostles. The harmony of the whole of divine revelation in the Old and New Testaments is also demonstrated in the image of the two cherubim placed over the propitiatory of the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25: 18–22).

Transmission of the patristic tradition

Although Jerome's order and pairing of the evangelists, followed by Gregory, became the standard one, there were variant elements in the patristic tradition which were also preserved by Insular commentators. The Book of Durrow, for example, presents the texts of the four gospels in the [58] usual Vulgate order of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John but the individual symbol pages prefacing each gospel are arranged in the order: man, eagle, calf, lion. This is the order of pairing favoured by Irenaeus and used in anonymous verses which prefaced some copies of the fourth-century biblical epic *Historia Evangelia* by Iuvencus and they are inscribed, in whole or in part, in three other illuminated gospel books of Irish origin or association, the Cadmug, MacRegol and MacDurnan Gospels.¹⁴ In

13 *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, CCSL 142 (1971), *Homilia* IV, 47.

14 Martin Werner, 'The four Evangelist symbols in the Book of Durrow', *Gesta* 8 (1969), 3–17, n.

7; Patrick McGurk, 'The Irish pocket gospel book', *Sacris Erudiri* 8 (1956), 249–70, 253 n. 1;

the prologue to his commentary on Luke's gospel, Bede defends another order: Matthew–lion, Mark–man, Luke–calf, John–eagle which he had used in his commentary on the Apocalypse, citing the authority of Augustine's *De consensu evangelistarum* I, 6. Augustine's preferred ordering is also quite frequently cited in Hiberno-Latin exegesis.¹⁵ The modern editor of Adomnán, the ninth abbot of Columba's monastic foundation at Iona (679–704) notes Adomnán's familiarity with Jerome's Vulgate biblical text and his commentary on Matthew's gospel and observes that 'practically the whole corpus of Jerome's writings must have been known and studied throughout the Columban monasteries at this time'.¹⁶ Nearly a century earlier Columbanus, who had been educated at Bangor, wrote from the continent to Gregory the Great in 600 showing great veneration for Jerome and specifically mentioning that he had read the first six books of Jerome's commentary [59] on Ezekiel and requesting that Gregory should send him a copy of his own recent tracts on the same subject.¹⁷

Patristic tradition on the four gospels became familiar in Insular monastic culture not only through the transmission of exegetical texts on the two scriptural visions of the four living creatures in Ezekiel and the Apocalypse; other scriptural passages could also inspire comment on the four gospels or on particular aspects of them. Exegetical or encyclopaedic compilations were another important means of transmission, notably Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* which is used in several seventh-century works of Irish exegesis including the pseudo-Jerome's *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum*.¹⁸ Book VI.2 of the *Etymologiae* gives a succinct account of the order, language and place of composition of the four gospels, briefly characterises each gospel through comment on its opening words and shows how the evangelists were prefigured in the four living creatures of Ezekiel's vision. It translates the word *evangelium* as *bona adnuntiatio*, as Hiberno-Latin commentators frequently do.

Sedulius's gospel epic, the *Carmen Paschale* c. 425–50, which was known to Insular writers, also conveys many elements of the exegetical tradition on the four gospels including the image of the waters of baptism, the four rivers of paradise flowing from a single fount and the taking of the four gospels to the four corners of the world (3: 170–75). The four evangelists are related to symbols of cosmic harmony: they are shown to be of the same number as the seasons and,

Lawrence Nees, 'The colophon drawing in the Book of Mulling: a supposed Irish monastery plan and the tradition of terminal illustration in early medieval manuscripts', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 5 (1983), 67–91, 84, pl. VII.

15 Bede, *In Lucae Evangelium expositio*, CCSL 120 (1960), 10. Robert McNally (ed.), *Scriptores Hiberniae minores, I*, CCSL 108 B (1973), 139 for named quotation from Augustine in Angers MS 55; Orleans 65 (2) is unpublished.

16 Denis Meehan (ed.), *Adomnán's De locis sanctis* (Dublin 1958).

17 G.S.M. Walker (ed.), *Sancti Columbani opera. Scriptores latini Hiberniae 2* (Dublin 1970), Ep. I, 10.

18 J.N. Hillgarth, 'Ireland and Spain in the seventh century', *Peritia* 3 (1984), 1–16, 8.

through their dissemination by the twelve apostles, they are further related to the twelve months of the year and the very hours in the day. In a Carolingian manuscript (Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, M. 17.4, fol. 13) which may be derived from an Insular copy of an [60] Early Christian illustrated *Carmen Paschale*, is a scene of the four evangelist symbols flanking a draped triumphant Cross denoting the risen and exalted Christ. It is set between two lines of text explaining that the four evangelists, though scattered throughout the world, sing of Christ with a single voice. This allusion to Psalms 18: 5 immediately follows the famous quatrain which relates the evangelists, their symbolic beasts and their gospel openings (1: 356–59):

*Hoc Matthaeus agens, hominem generaliter implet.
 Marcus ut alta fremit vox per deserta leonis,
 Jura sacerdotis Lucas tenet ore juvenci,
 More volans aquilae, verbo petit astra Johannes.*

The lines were often detached from the text to serve as *tituli* for evangelist portraits in Carolingian gospel books, but the earliest extant appearance of this practice is in a sixth-century Italian gospel book (Cambridge CCC 286) which was brought to Anglo-Saxon England very early, possibly by the Gregorian mission.¹⁹

Although some Insular gospel books have lost some or all of their prefatory materials and a few, following very early practice, may never have had them, Eusebius's canon tables of the gospel concordances and Jerome's explanatory letter *Novum opus* appear in a number of Insular gospel books and in others are combined with the extremely influential introduction to Jerome's commentary on Matthew, the *Plures fuisse*.²⁰ The essential points of the tradition [61] were also familiar from the liturgical *traditio evangeliorum*. This ritual opened the ceremony of the *apertio aurium* in which the four Gospels, the Apostles' Creed and the Our Father were symbolically handed on to catechumens in the context of a mass and as part of the Lenten scrutinies preparing them for the initiation of Baptism and the reception of the Eucharist at Easter. The ritual is described not only in the early Roman *ordines* but in the Old Gelasian sacramentary and the 'eighth-century Gelasian', including the Gellone Sacramentary, as well as

19 PL XIX, 591, J. Huemer (ed.), *Sedulii opera omnia*, CSEL 10; Carl Springer, *The Gospel as epic in late antiquity. The Carmen Paschale of Sedulius* (Leiden, NY 1988), 128–35 for its early influence. Alexander, *Insular MSS* cat. 65, pl. 290 for Antwerp illustration. Francis Wormald, *The miniatures in the Gospels of St Augustine*, Cambridge Corpus Christi Coll. MS 286 (Cambridge 1954), 3–5, pl. XIVa; Carol Levine, 'Vulpes fossa habent or the miracle of the bent woman in the Gospels of St Augustine', CCC MS 286, *Art Bulletin* 56 (1974), 488–84, 503–504 for early transmission. I am grateful to James Cronin for a photograph of the Antwerp folio.

20 Patrick McGurk, *Latin Gospel books from A.D. 400 to A.D. 800* (Paris-Brussels 1961) for contents of individual Insular manuscripts; Patrick McGurk, *The texts at the opening of the book* in Fox (ed.), *The Book of Kells*, 37–58, gospel prefaces 40–41.

in Gallican sacramentaries including the Bobbio Missal, and is twice cited by Bede.²¹

The four gospels were carried in solemn procession from the sacristy accompanied by light and incense, and placed at the four corners of the altar. Their identification as the *bona adnuntiatio*, the good news of the coming of Jesus Christ, was expounded first by reference to the theophany of Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures and by each of the four gospels in turn being carried ceremonially to the ambo from which its opening lines were declaimed. After each gospel reading by a deacon, the priest gave a short homily explaining the relationship between each gospel and its symbolic beast.

Éamonn Ó Carragáin has stressed the importance of such public enactment for the illiterate as well as the learned, [62] providing a mnemonic of the sacred texts. He has speculated that whole page illustrations of the individual evangelist symbols (such as those introducing each of the four Gospels in the Book of Durrow and the Echternach Gospels) or portraits of the four evangelists accompanied by their symbolic beasts (as in the Lindisfarne and Lichfield Gospels) may, together with their enlarged and decorated incipits, have been displayed at suitable moments during the ceremony.²²

Both the communal ritual of the *traditio evangeliorum* and the learned exegetical tradition summarised in Jerome's *Plures fuisse* and elaborated in Hiberno-Latin commentaries, feature the pairing of the evangelists with the four beasts of Ezekiel's vision and explain that pairing by reference to the opening lines of each gospel, which were clearly seen as representing the whole of each gospel and encapsulating its particular characteristics. Both liturgy and exegesis were concerned to show the individuality of the four gospels yet their essential unity and harmony as symbols of Christ. Moreover some of the features in the Hiberno-Latin texts which are additional to the *Plures fuisse* are also contained in the liturgical ceremony, suggesting not direct borrowing but a shared tradition.

The link between Baptism and the four gospels was made in the early identification of the sacramental waters of Baptism with the paradisaical water of life which issued from a single source in Eden and divided into four rivers to water the whole earth, just as the four gospels flow from Christ to water the whole Church. The blessing of the font in the Irish Stowe Missal (c. 800) includes

21 Pierre de Puniet, *Apertio aurium*, DACL I, pt. 2, (1924) cols. 2523–37. E.A. Lowe (ed.), *Bobbio Missal* HBS 58 (London 1920), 175–82; D. Hurst (ed.), *De tabernaculo* II and *In Ezram et Neemian* II, *Beda's opera exegetica*, CCSL 119 A (1969), 89, 310–11; A. C. Holder (tr.), *Bede, On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool 1994), 101; E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the baptismal liturgy* 2nd ed. (London 1970) for translations of the ceremony 172–74, 199–201, 204–206 (Bobbio Missal). Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and literature in western England, 600–800* (Cambridge 1990), 293–95; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Traditio evangeliorum and sustentatio: the relevance of liturgical ceremonies to the Book of Kells* in Felicity O'Mahony (ed.), *The Book of Kells* (Aldershot 1994), 398–436, 400–406 and notes.

22 É. Ó Carragáin, *Traditio evangelistarum and sustentio*, 403–406.

the common evocation of the rivers of paradise during the rite of baptism. The opening lection of the prebaptismal *apertio aurium* ceremony begins, 'All you that thirst come to the waters' (Isaiah 55: 1), a text applied by Christ to himself: 'If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believes in [63] me, as scripture says, "From his breast shall flow fountains of living water"' (John 7: 37–8). The Johannine text was part of a patristic exegetical chain expounding the New Testament's own interpretation in 1 Corinthians 10.4 of the water struck from the rock by Moses as a prefiguring of the water struck from Christ's side, the living water of Christian baptism. In the earliest surviving scriptural commentary the connection of this allusive text with the four rivers of paradise is already made. Christ, the inexhaustible source from which the four rivers flow to water the earth 'is announced to the entire world by those who believe in him, according to the words of the prophet: "Out of his breast shall flow rivers of living water"'.²³ An eighth-century text of Irish influence, *Quaestiones vel glosae in evangelio*, in Angers 55, quotes John 7: 37–8 precisely in the context of describing how the four paradisaal rivers figure the four gospels which issue from a single fountain, Christ, and through the teaching of the apostles and other preachers, water the whole earth.²⁴ Angers 55 then quotes from Psalms 18: 5, 'Their sound has gone forth into all the earth and their words to the end of the world'. The psalm text, as used by St Paul in allusion to preachers of the Gospel in Romans 10: 18, is also incorporated in the composite opening lections in the *apertio aurium* ceremony.

The instruction of catechumens in the form of the handing on of the four gospels (and the baptism for which the *apertio aurium* ceremony is a preparation) are a response to [64] Christ's final command to his disciples: 'Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28: 19). The trinitarian baptismal formula and the injunction *docete omnes gentes* were commonly viewed through the image of the twelve disciples taking the four gospels and belief in the Trinity to the four cardinal points or corners of the world. The prefiguring of the Matthean text and the numerologically charged image it evoked was discerned in various Old Covenant exemplifications of the numbers three, four and twelve. In a rare surviving quotation from the lost work of the fourth-century exegete Fortunatianus, Angers 55 cites the typological example of the twelve bronze oxen which supported the

23 Hippolytus's commentary on the Book of Daniel, cited by H. Kessler, *The illustrated bibles from Tours* 50; 40–53 for association of the four Evangelists and four rivers by Cyprian and Ambrose; cf. P. Underwood, *The fountain of life*, 72–73, 106–131 for the image in exegesis and early medieval gospel books. E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the baptismal liturgy*, 187, 210, 217–19 (Stowe Missal) for rivers of paradise recalled in the blessing of the font before baptism. Hugo Rahner, 'Flumina de ventre Christi – die patristische Auslegung von Joh. 7:37–8', *Biblica* 22 (1941), 269–302, 362–403.

24 Robert McNally (ed.), *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* pars I CCSL 11 B (1973), Document I, 133–49, 135.

water laver in Solomon's Temple, grouped in threes around the rim of the bowl and facing outwards towards the four winds or cardinal points (3 Kings 7: 25).²⁵ Bede gives the same interpretation of the twelve oxen and the water laver in relation to Matthew 28:19 but in the context of a pastoral and theological exposition on baptism which forms part of his sustained reading of the Temple as an image of the Church.²⁶ Both approaches stem from a common hermeneutic but the abbreviated text-book enumerations favoured in some Hiberno-Latin exegetical works can obscure from modern readers the associations which standard images and listings could hold for an audience which was also familiar with scripture in the context of *lectio divina* and liturgy. Angers 55 is of particular interest in documenting some of those associations.

There was, then, a large body of exegesis on the four gospels transmitted through various media and known at different levels of sophistication. In a liturgical and pastoral context it could be applied to the sacramental and spiritual life but the patristic tradition on the theme of the four [65] gospels could articulate an entire world view encompassing the human microcosm; time, space and the structure of the universe; the nature of Christ and the process of Redemption. In appropriating this common tradition in a variety of literary contexts Hiberno-Latin commentators responded to some of its features more readily than to others and developed their own distinctive voice. Alongside the traditional pattern 'other modes of thought and expression emerge which at times deviate from the patristic comprehension, complement or transcend it'.²⁷ Further discussion of Angers 55 and other examples may briefly suggest the nature of this tradition.

The Hiberno-Latin tradition of the evangelists

The *Plures fuisse* text was clearly a major source for the *Quaestiones vel glossae in evangelio nomine* in Angers 55 fols. 1–12v, whose editor describes it as a teaching manual or notebook reflecting the Irish biblical tradition on the continent in the late eighth century and combining elements of both the Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions of exegesis.²⁸ It quotes Jerome's own opening in its defence of the canonical gospels against rivals by stressing the importance of the number four and by showing that the canonical gospels are prophesied in scripture, most notably in the four rivers of Paradise and the four carrying-rings of the Ark of the Covenant. Like the *Plures fuisse* text, Angers 55 combines such images of Gospel unity and harmony with descriptions of the four gospels' individual characteristics, partly by presenting details of the place, circumstance and original language of their composition, partly by expounding Ezekiel's vision.

25 *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* pars I, 145–46. B. Bischoff, *Turning-points in the history of Latin exegesis in the early Irish church AD 650–800*, cat. 14.1, 111–12.

26 Bede, *De templo*, (ed.), D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 209–10.

27 R. McNally, *The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition* 113.

28 *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* pars I, 127–32.

The four living creatures are related to the evangelists and their gospel openings in Jerome's order and [66] are also related to the living creatures of St John's apocalyptic vision of Christ's majesty.

Some of the ways in which Angers 55 supplements the introduction to Jerome's commentary on Matthew with scriptural quotations have already been indicated. It also uses additional patristic and apocryphal material to emphasise the way in which the four gospels – the quadriga of God – are figured in other quaternities. The cosmic tetragrammaton of Adam's name, ultimately derived from the apocryphal Book of the Secrets of Enoch, is cited in various contexts by Augustine and Bede, but it is a recurring theme in Hiberno-Latin treatments of the four gospels.²⁹ Angers 55 explains that in Hebrew, Greek and Latin the name of the first man is formed from four letters just as he was formed from the four elements. Adam was expelled from paradise *per quattuor elementa peccando*. Christ the second Adam comes without sin, offering healing; through the four gospels humanity is restored to life and the hope of eternal salvation. The four Greek letters of the name of Adam are related to the four parts of the world to which his seed was scattered: *Antholim, Dissis, Arctus et Missimbria. Id est, oriens, occidens, aquilo et meridie(s)*. From the four corners of the world humanity will be drawn to salvation by the fourfold Gospel. Brief quotations show that this is what was prophesied in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones of the house of Israel being brought to life by the breath of God coming from the four winds (Ezekiel 37: 9); this is what is promised in the gospel when Christ reveals that the new chosen people will 'come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south and shall sit down in the kingdom of God' (Luke 13:29). [67]

The very contents of the gospels form a tetrad – *aeterna, futura, agenda* and *facta* – related to the fourfold interpretation of scripture – the anagogic, allegorical, tropological and historical senses; the Gospel's fourfold nature is also shown in the four cardinal virtues [11–13]. The idea of the four gospels defending the Church from temptation and evil is prefigured in the fourfold dimensions and timbers of Noah's Ark. The saving of its eight human inmates from the Flood, already interpreted in I Peter 3: 20–21 as an image of Baptism, is noted here and further related to the eight Beatitudes [13–14]. The harmony of the four gospels with each other and with the whole of divine revelation is shown through their traditional comparison with the four carrying-rings of the Ark of the Covenant which contained two stones signifying the Old and the New Testaments.

The *Quaestiones* text in Angers 55 is thus not simply a listing of authorities, quaternities, etymologies, numerology and arcane knowledge but presents a coherent theological view. It has been seen that the standard image of the four

29 R. McNally, *The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition* 115–16; *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* pars I, 134 n. 7. Walter Berschin, *Why did the Venerable Bede write a second prose Life of Cuthbert?* in G. Bonner, D. Rollason, C. Stancliffe (edd.), *St Cuthbert, his cult and his community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge 1989), 95–102 at 99–100.

gospels proceeding from Christ their centre, like the four rivers from paradise, to draw all humanity to Christ from the four corners of the world, is here given a strongly sacramental interpretation through allusion to John 7: 37–8 and the baptismal water of life; and that it is closely related to the idea of the evangelists, apostles and other teachers going out to the ends of the earth (Psalms 18: 5) to fulfil Christ's command in Matthew 28:19.

The second example of this exegesis is from Munich, Clm 6235, a ninth-century manuscript probably copied, McNally suggested, from an Irish exemplar and reflecting work of c. 750–775 which shows the strong influence of the Irish biblical schools.³⁰ Folios 32v–33v, *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in evangelia excerpta*, takes the form not of a gospel commentary but of a systematic investigation of scripture which is very different in character from Angers 55, [68] though they had access to a common tradition of material on the evangelists and the gospel quaternities. Munich, Clm 6235 has several features which often help characterise Hiberno-Latin exegesis: an interest in explaining terms in the three sacred languages, the technique of structuring the material in short questions and answers and of enumeration and etymologies. It investigates the gospels' composition not only under the customary headings of *tempus*, *locus et persona* which Gregory the Great thought must first be established in prophetic speech before elucidating mysteries, but under fourteen categories; and it lists instances of first occasions – the first time the word *evangelium* is used in the Old Testament and the New, the first words and the first parable of Christ in the gospels, etc.

Munich, Clm 6235 establishes the individual identities of the four gospels by investigating questions such as the time, place, language, order and authority of their composition, the origins of their authors and significance of their names. The gospel openings are not paired with the four evangelist symbols but with the particular 'rule' characterising each gospel: *Matheus scripsit secundum regulam fidei et electionis dicens primitus de Abraham et David qui est caput fidei, ut est: Liber generationis Iesu Christi filii David, filii Abraham*; Mark wrote according to the rule of the prophets, Luke to the rule of priests and John according to the rule of Christ [11]. The harmony of the four gospels' testimony is demonstrated by reference to cosmic and scriptural quaternities [15–19]. In all examples except the four seasons there are specific pairings with the evangelists and sometimes brief explanations. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are signified in the elements (earth, water, air and fire respectively), the four rivers of paradise (Eufratis, Tigris, Geon, Fison), the four living creatures of Ezekiel's vision, the four seasons of the year and the four parts of the world, (east, south, west and north, also given as *anathole*, *misimbria*, *dissis*, *arctus* though there is no explicit reference to the name of Adam). The *qualitates evangelii* are characterised: *id est precepta, mandata, testimonia, exempla* [20]. [69] The traditional images of the

30 *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* pars I 213–19, preface 209–11.

Apocalyptic vision and the Ark of the Covenant are here missing but other scriptural fours are introduced: the four men who carried the bed of the palsied man (Mark 2: 3, also used in the eighth-century commentary on Matthew preserved in Orleans, bibl. mun., ms 65 (62)) and the four soldiers who cast lots for Christ's garment at the Crucifixion (John 19: 23). Finally, Munich, Clm 6235 lists various numerical features of the gospels – how many gospels, chapters, verses, culminating in quite a detailed examination of the Eusebian canon tables, their number, arrangement, function and authority, together with brief scriptural quotations illustrative of each canon [21–23]. The material is also taken up in the late eighth-century Irish Reference Bible which devotes some seven columns to the canon tables alone.³¹

The evident concern of exegetes to repeat and supplement material which is set out in the gospel concordance of the Eusebian canon tables and in Jerome's brief explanation of them in the *Novum opus* is in some way mirrored in the elaborate decorative embellishment of these prefatory materials in Insular gospel books. In the Lindisfarne Gospels the Cross carpet-page frontispiece is faced by the ornate opening words of the *Novum opus* enlarged to fill the whole page under the rubric *Incipit prologus X canonum*; the opening word of the *Plures fuisse* and of Eusebius's letter to Carpianus, which again explains the canon tables, are enlarged and decorated (fols. 5v, 8) and the canon tables themselves, set out under stately architectural arcades, spread over sixteen magnificent pages (fols. 10–17v).³² Parallel columns [70] of numbers display the correspondence between a particular numbered section of text in one gospel with a similar passage in one or more of the remaining three gospels. Nine canon tables systematically list the numbers of the sections which are shared by all four gospels, then by any three of them, then by any pair of them and the tenth table records the sections unique to each gospel. Jerome's prefaces are missing from the Book of Kells in its present state but the canon tables form one of the most splendid decorative sequences in the book. The evangelist symbols appear in the arcades but are not simply inserted like captions at the head of individual columns of numbers relating to their respective gospel texts. In the first two double openings (fols. 1v–3r) and in the last page before the sequence changes from arcades to a grid pattern (fol. 5r), the symbolic beasts are placed in the tympanum overspanning the subsidiary arches which contain the individual gospel entries. The beasts' various striking groupings, exchanged glances, overlapping and interwoven pinions and

31 Paris, B.N. lat. 11561, fols. 126–37r. Unpublished. C.D. Wright, *Hiberno-Latin and Irish-influenced biblical commentaries* cat. 1, 90–92.

32 London, B.L. Cotton Nero C. IV, J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular manuscripts 6th to 9th century* cat. 9, pl. 32, 36–37, 40–41. For the importance of the numerical texts in canon tables as evidence for identifying links between particular groups of Insular gospel books see Patrick McGurk, *The disposition of numbers in Latin Eusebian canon tables* in R. Gryson (ed.), *Philologia sacra. Biblische und patristische Studien für H.J. Frede und W. Thiele* (Freiburg 1993), 242–58: I am grateful to the author for this reference.

limbs, their hybrid forms borrowing each other's features, seem to articulate the interconnectedness of the gospels they represent and to form a pictorial exegesis on the harmony of the four gospels which the canon tables were devised to demonstrate.³³ The iconographic interpretation is strongly reinforced by evidence of the extent and early origins of Insular interest in the canons and not only in the literature of gospel quaternities.

Already in the seventh century the Irish scholar Ailerán of Clonard (d. 665) had produced an exegetical poem 'On the evangelical canons' which is closely modelled on the [71] structure of the concordance to the four gospels provided in the ten Eusebian canon tables. Ailerán visualises ten tableaux in which the gospels are represented by their symbolic beasts in harmonious discourse, revealing the number of passages in which, in any particular canon table, they 'speak together of the Lord', 'with one voice', 'in equality and unity'. The poem suggests that canon tables illustrated with the evangelists 'symbolic beasts may have been known in seventh-century Ireland. Ailerán's poem has survived in the context of gospel books, including two with clear Insular connections. In Poitiers Bibl. mun. 17 it appears on fol. 26 immediately following the canon tables. The Augsburg Gospels opens with a copy of Ailerán's poem facing a diagrammatic evocation of the single truth of the fourfold Gospel (fols. 1v–2r) placed before the *Plures fuisse, Novum opus* and canon tables. A closely related gospel fragment, the Maeseyck Gospels, which was also produced in the early eighth-century at the eclectic Insular centre at Echternach, depicts the evangelists' beasts in its canon tables.³⁴

Nancy Netzer has argued persuasively that the two related Echternach manuscripts, Augsburg and Maeseyck, had access to an Irish gospel book which combined Ailerán's poem with a copy of the canon tables of the same recension as Augsburg's and possibly illustrated by the evangelist symbols. This would have important implications for the dating and iconography of the Book of Kells whose famous depiction of the evangelist symbols in its canon tables, apparently without Insular precedent, was for long seen as the result of Carolingian influence. Quite the reverse may have been the [72] case. Irish canon tables with evangelist symbols may have influenced eighth-century continental books

33 Alexander, *Insular MSS*, cat. 52, pl. 232, 234–37. Françoise Henry, *The Book of Kells* colour plates 2–5, 9. Discussed by George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells. The Insular gospel books* 640–800 (London 1987), 131–41; P. McGurk, *The texts at the beginning of the book* in Fox (ed.), *The Book of Kells*, 53, 57. The canon table numbers were never inserted in the margins of the gospel texts alongside the appropriate passages in the Book of Kells.

34 *Aileranus Canon evangeliorum*, D. de Bruyne, *Préfaces de la bible latine* (Namur 1920) 185–86; Wright, *Hiberno-Latin and Irish-influenced biblical commentaries* cat. 19, 101–102. Text of the poem in the Augsburg Gospels (Augsburg, Universitätsbibl. Cod. 1.2.4° 2 *olim* Mailingen) published with full discussion of the canon tables in the Echternach mss: Nancy Netzer, *Cultural interplay in the eighth century. The Trier Gospels and the making of a scriptorium at Echternach* (Cambridge 1994), 205–206, 55–83, 226 n. 52 and plates. Alexander, *Insular MSS*, cat. 23, 24.

which in turn influenced the gospel books produced in Charlemagne's court scriptorium.³⁵

The fourth example of Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the four gospels is from the introduction of an unpublished commentary on Matthew's gospel in Munich, Clm 6233, fols. 1r–7v, thought to have been written in southern Bavaria, perhaps Tegernsee c. 770–80.³⁶ Like Jerome's introduction to his commentary on Matthew it shows the distinctiveness of the four gospels through the biographies of their individual authors and their essential harmony through the images of the four rivers of paradise and the carrying-rings of the Ark; the evangelists are shown to have been prophetically figured in the two scriptural theophanies revealed to Ezekiel and St John. Like the Hiberno-Latin pseudo-Jerome, it adds the etymologies of the evangelists' names, the association of the four gospels with the four letters of Adam's name and the four elements and includes the Gregorian connection between the four evangelists, their symbolic beasts and the four mysteries of Christ: his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. Where Munich, Clm 6233 differs from both Jerome and pseudo-Jerome is in its use of three of these standard scriptural quaternities – the four rivers, the Ark and Ezekiel's vision – as a framework on which to base theological expositions, developed through the association of words and images, through etymologies, further compressed scriptural allusions and the enumeration of allegorical interpretations. The source of the four rivers of paradise, for example, is expounded not simply as Christ but as the [73] incarnate Christ, the divine Saviour who descended into the womb of Mary and from there moved through four mysteries: *de utero in praeseptum, de praeseptio in crucem, de cruce in sepulchrum, inde surgens a mortuis angelorum agminia penetravit* (fol. 3v). Gregory the Great in his gospel homily 29 had also used the image in connection with the Incarnation: 'Truth having made himself known in the flesh, gave some great leaps for us to make us run after him'; the leaps are described as from heaven to the womb, from the womb to the manger, from the manger to the cross, from the cross to the sepulchre and from the sepulchre he returned to heaven. Gregory refers to Psalms 18:6 and the Song of Songs 1:3, 2:8 and the passage is taken up by Bede in his commentary on the Song of Songs. In Munich, Clm 6233 the image, reduced to four stages, is subordinated to describing Christ, the source of the four rivers, but is also related to the spiritual life. Paradise, the *locus deliciarum* watered by these rivers, is likened to the Church which receives a diversity of spiritual gifts or graces from God, *id est, aliis sapientiam sermonum, aliis gratiam curationum, aliis scientiam sermonium, aliis gratiam virtutum* (fol. 3v).

35 N. Netzer, *The origin of the beast canons reconsidered* in F. O'Mahony (ed.), *The Book of Kells*, 322–32, 328.

36 B. Bischoff, *Turning-points* cat. 23, 126–27; C. Wright, *Hiberno-Latin and Irish-influenced biblical commentaries* cat. 26, 105. The manuscript is being prepared for publication by Denis Brearley and Seán Connolly: I am most grateful to Dr Connolly for generously letting me use his transcript.

The new quaternity depends on the Pauline use of the body as a metaphor for the Church, individual Christians with a variety of abilities and functions being the limbs or members of the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12: 4–31; cf. Romans 12: 4–8; Ephesians 4: 4–13). By implication, this image of diversity in unity is applied to the four gospels. Similarly, the image of the Ark of the Covenant with four carrying-rings as prefiguring the Church whose sound doctrine is carried by the united testimony of the gospels, is also developed further through allusion to the major exegesis in the Epistle to the Hebrews which treats the Old Covenant Tabernacle, Ark, priesthood and blood sacrifices as figures of Christ as the new Temple, High Priest and victim. The specific connection made in Munich, Clm 6233, fol. 4v between the manna contained in the Ark (Hebrews 9: 4) and the Eucharist quotes from Christ's own extended comparison of the manna with himself as the living bread come down from heaven [74] *Ego sum panis vivus qui de caelo descendi* (John 6: 31–58). Thirdly, Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures in the midst of fire is interpreted according to Jerome and especially Gregory; it is also seen as an image of Christ the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2: 5), of his human and divine natures (fol. 5r) and it elaborates on how the only begotten Son of God was truly made man (fol. 6r). The spiritual significance of the positioning of the creatures within the tableau of Ezekiel's vision and the prefiguring of Christ's incarnation, passion, resurrection and ascension in the faces of the man, the calf, the lion and the eagle respectively are explained in Gregorian fashion. The standard gospel quaternities are therefore used in Munich, Clm 6233 as starting-points for a series of sophisticated theological and mystical expositions on the divine descent testified in the gospels. Meditation on the fourfold Gospel illumines different aspects of the body of Christ: incarnate, glorified, ecclesial and sacramental. Finally, the threefold sanctus unendingly chanted by the four living creatures around the divine throne in the apocalyptic vision (Revelation 4: 8) is seen as testifying to the four gospels' confession of the Trinity (fol. 7v).

The last example of this literature is by far the best known. The pseudo-Jerome's *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum* which may have been compiled in late seventh-century Ireland, was widely influential on Hiberno-Latin exegesis³⁷ Its introduction is a succinct summary of the Irish tradition on the gospel quaternities. The whole world is composed of four elements and the linking of John–air, Matthew–earth, Luke–fire, Mark–water is explained by very brief scriptural quotations, three from the gospel incipits. Each Evangelist is then specifically related to one of the four named rivers (listed with their etymologies) which flow from the single fountain, Christ, and water both the Church and the individual soul with the four cardinal virtues. Similarly [75], the human body is shown to be composed of the four primordial elements which in turn are related to four human elements (*aer: flatus; igne: sanguis; aqua: flamma; terra: corpus*) and

37 PL 30, 531–34. Bischoff, *Turning-points* cat. 11A, 108–109; Wright, *Hiberno-Latin and Irish-influenced biblical commentaries* cat. 18, 100–101.

even to four parts of the body. The four Evangelists are shown to be related not only to this quadripartite structure of the universe and mankind but to the cosmic tetragrammaton of Adam's name; as all mankind is born of Adam, so all come to the faith through the four gospels.

This cosmic symbolism of the fourfold harmony of the gospels is echoed by the elaboration of traditional scriptural images of the four dimensions of Noah's Ark and the four carrying-rings of the Ark of the Covenant as figures of the four gospels' united testimony in defending and supporting the Church against heresy. Their individual identity is expounded through the common etymologies of their authors' names: *Matthaeus donatus. Marcus donum excelsum. Lucas consurgens. Joannes gratia Dei*. Two are apostles, two are disciples. The pairing of the four living creatures in Ezekiel's vision with the four evangelists follows Jerome's order but adds Gregory the Great's symbolic identification of Christ with the man, calf, lion and eagle at his birth, death, resurrection and ascension respectively. Without any explanation whatever the four evangelists are linked with a final and curious set of four: *Mattheus mel. Marcus lac. Lucas oleum. Joannes vinum*. Though each of these substances or liquids has biblical and sacramental significance, they do not appear in scripture as a quaternity but they are found together in apocryphal vision literature.³⁸ The introduction of pseudo-Jerome's commentary on the gospels therefore combines cosmic, scriptural [76] and apocryphal quaternities and the harmony of the macrocosm and microcosm (though without using those terms) in its numerological exposition on the unity of the four gospels.

Cosmic schemata: exegesis and iconography

What kind of contribution can the study of this exegetical material make to the study of Insular gospel book illustration? One long-standing art-historical debate may be cited by way of example. There has been increasing refinement in modern interpretations of medieval abstract images of divine order, particularly in the didactic inscribed and figured diagrams which were common from the Romanesque period. Of its nature, however, it is difficult to substantiate the suggestion that certain geometric shapes in Insular art can, in particular contexts, have a religious as well as a decorative or functional significance. Otto Werckmeister, for example, has argued that the rhombus at the centre of the four-symbols page on fol. 290v in the Book of Kells has a cosmological significance (Plate 3.8). The scholarly reservations which have been expressed about such hypotheses,

38 *The Book of Secrets of Enoch* in R. H. Charles (ed.), *Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford 1913), ii 448; *Visio Pauli* in M.R. James (ed.), *The apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford 1924) 538; M. McNamara, *The apocrypha in the Irish church* (Dublin 1975, repr. 1984) no. 91. For other examples of the association of the four Evangelists and the four liquids see R. McNally, *The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition* 116–119 and J. O'Reilly, 'The Hiberno-Latin tradition of the Evangelists and the Gospels of Mael Brigte', *Peritia* 9 (1995), 290–309.

contrast with the general acceptance of a cosmological interpretation of the rhombus in some Carolingian schematised images of gospel harmony.³⁹ The versions of the Carolingian *Maiestas* image which appear in the St Gauzelin Gospels at Nancy and as gospel frontispieces in the Touronian bibles, including the Vivian Bible (Paris, [77] B.N. lat. 1, fol. 329v, Figure 4.1), have a strong quadripartite structure focused on a central lozenge or rhombus with the apocalyptic Christ enthroned at its centre and the evangelists and their symbolic beasts variously disposed in circular medallions at the four cardinal points of the lozenge and in the spandrels or four corners of the rectangular outer frame. It has often been assumed that underlying such frontispiece images are late antique cosmological schemata depicting the *tetragonus mundus* as a quadrangular figure – a square or lozenge – inscribed with the names of the four cardinal points, four elements and so on (as in the example preserved in a Carolingian astronomical manuscript, possibly from Salzburg c. 818, Vienna, National bibl. Cod. 387, fol. 134r). Kessler further argued that the lozenge-shaped figure of the *tetragonus mundus* was introduced into the St Gauzelin *Maiestas* image to designate the paradisaical world watered by the four rivers of living water which, both in patristic exegesis such as the *Plures fuisse* text prefacing the gospels and in contemporary Carolingian exegesis, are identified with the four gospels proceeding from a single fount, Christ.⁴⁰

If this is so, the interpretation offers a pictorial parallel to the process whereby the early Fathers had made use of existing concepts of the fourfold nature of the cosmos to argue for the divinely-inspired harmony of the fourfold Gospel and to show that both cosmological and scriptural demonstrations of the importance of the number four centre on the Creator-Logos. The interpretation depends on the assumption that an informed contemporary reader of the Carolingian *Maiestas* image would, in this context, read the abstract motif of the lozenge not simply as a compositional device, decoratively dividing the picture space, but as also having symbolic significance. The particular cosmological associations it might suggest would stem from contemporary familiarity with antique schemata and the explicit identification [78] of the four-sided lozenge with the world in Carolingian exegesis and *carmina figurata*.⁴¹

39 Otto-Karl Werckmeister, *Irish-northumbische Buchmalerei des 8 Jahrhunderts und monastische Spiritualität* (Berlin 1967), 153–67 pl. 41–43a, 45b, 48; cf. Hans Meyer, *Zur Symbolik Frühmittelalterlicher Majestasbilder, Das Münster, Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* 14 (1961), 73–88, 74. ‘Werckmeister’s work reviewed with reservations by Paul Meyvaert’, *Speculum* 46 (1971), 408–11; referring to Meyer and Werckmeister, H. Kessler notes ‘whether the central lozenge of the John frontispiece in the Book of Kells (fol. 290v) has cosmic meaning is also questionable. No doubt can exist, however, that in Carolingian art, the lozenge had symbolic meaning’, *The illustrated bibles from Tours* 52.

40 *The illustrated bibles from Tours* 51–53, pl. 75, 64 (Nancy, Cathédrale, Gospels fol. 3v).

41 *Illustrated bibles from Tours*, 51–52, notes 109, 110. Ulrich Ernst, Carmen figuratum. *Geschichte des Figurengedichts von den antiken Ursprüngen bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Cologne 1991) for examples of figured texts highlighting the lozenge shape: 168–77 for Alcuin.



Figure 4.1 Vivian Bible, lat. 1 fol. 329v. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). Photo © BnF, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/image BnF.

The Carolingian authors usually cited in this connection are, however, Charlemagne's Anglo-Saxon scholar Alcuin and his pupil Hrabanus Maurus, who were familiar with Insular exegesis. Hrabanus's *De universo* does metaphorically describe the world as being quadrangular, but so do earlier Hiberno-Latin exegetes and specifically in the context of discussing cosmic quaternities which demonstrate the harmony of the four gospels. In the late antique tradition of *carmina figurata* Alcuin does have a figural poem arranged in the form of a cross-inscribed lozenge but this technique had been used in a gospel book with strong Insular affiliations probably in the early eighth century and with very particular relevance to gospel harmony.

The Augsburg Gospels which, as has been seen, opens with a copy of a seventh-century Irish poem on the Evangelical canons, has on the facing folio a word-square containing repetitions of the words *Evangelia veritatis*.⁴²

42 Alexander, *Insular mss*, cat. 24, pl. 115, Ernst, *Carmen figuratum*, 403–404, pl. 125.

Stemming from a shared initial 'E' at the central point, the word *Evangelia* is written out four times like the four arms of the Cross extending to the four cardinal points of the square frame. The letters are faced in such a way that the arms of the Cross imply a circular motion. The remaining repetitions of the word *Evangelia* are arranged so that the last four letters 'elia' of each repetition, which are coloured, form the clear outline of a lozenge joining the cardinal points. The preceding four letters 'vang' form an inner lozenge immediately around the shared central initial 'E'. The second word in the phrase *Evangelia veritatis* is repeatedly and continuously [79] written out to fill the four spandrels or corners of the square outside the lozenge. The terminal letter of *veritatis* is not actually written out with each repetition but can be read in the decorative flourish of the single 's' placed diagonally outside each of the four corners of the square. The word *Evangelia* thus begins from a common centre and goes out to the four cardinal points of the world and *veritatis* literally fills its four corners. The combination of the central Cross and the lozenge in this context strongly suggest an aniconic representation of the Creator-Logos from whom the gospels proceed to the ends of the earth, their fourfold harmony figured in the *tetragonus mundus*. In this case the symbolic interpretation of an abstract figure is supported by its inscription and context. The phrase *Evangelia veritatis* has echoes from the epistles of the spoken and heard word of the Gospel taught by the apostles (*Quam audistis in verbo veritatis evangelii* Colossians 1: 5, cf. Galatians 2: 5). It forms an appropriate accompaniment to Ailerán's poem which, through reference to the canon tables, sometimes in the form of a riddling numerology, shows how the four gospels 'speak together of the Lord', 'in one voice'; this ingenious double opening is immediately followed in the Augsburg Gospels by the text of Jerome's *Plures fuisse*.

Although no Irish manuscript has survived showing a direct equivalent of the antique schemata of the *tetragonus mundus* preserved in the Carolingian manuscript in Vienna (Cod. 387, fol. 134r), Insular knowledge of such diagrams can reasonably be inferred and knowledge of the information conveyed by such schemata can certainly be demonstrated. The Carolingian example shows a lozenge within a square. The names of the four winds or directions are inscribed in medallions at the four cardinal points and the names of the four elements and their properties are inscribed in the four spandrels or corners. The central lozenge is divided into three and inscribed with the names of the three known continents, Asia, Africa and Europa, information available, for example, in Isidore of Seville's section *De orbe* in his *Etymologiae*: *Divisus est autem trifarie: e quibus una pars [80] Asia, altera Europa, tertia Africa nuncapatur*. In Hiberno-Latin exegesis the combination of a quadrangular world and a three-part division occurs in the mid-seventh century *Liber de ordine creaturarum*, in conjunction with the theme of the letters of Adam's name and the four directions.⁴³ It also

43 M. Smyth, 'The physical world in seventh-century Irish Hiberno-Latin texts', *Peritia* 5 (1986), 201–34, 229.

appears specifically in the context of expounding the unity of the four gospels. The eighth-century compilation, the Irish Reference Bible, speaks of *Mundus iste quadrangulus constitutus. In iii partibus divisus* (interpreted as signifying the four gospels and the Trinity to which they testify).⁴⁴ This threefold division is clearly distinguished from the concept of the fourfold ordering of creation. The immediately following passage elaborates the traditional naming of the various locations in which the four gospels were composed in order to associate each of the four evangelists with one of the four directional winds or parts of the world: *Matheus quippe in Iudaea. Id in oriente praedicavit. Marc ad austrum. in Alexandria. Lucas. ad occidente, in Achaia. Iohan. ad aquilonem. in Asia Minore praedicavit et scripsit.*

The single doctrine of the fourfold gospel is then described as being brought *a iiii partibus orbi*. The unity of the gospels is expounded through various cosmic quaternities and then by the scriptural quaternities cited in Jerome's *Plures fuisse*. Moreover the passage is preceded by a reference to the harmony of the whole of scripture, shown by the prefiguring of the four evangelists in the Old Testament prophets. The Carolingian Touronian bible images of Christ enthroned within a rhombus depict the four prophets as well as the evangelists and their symbols and show the evangelists writing at the four corners of the design against arcs of stylised landscape to designate the four parts of the earth (Figure 4.1).

Antique schemata are now known imperfectly from textual references and medieval copies or derivatives but [81] the continuing ancient encyclopaedic tradition including cosmological material can be traced to some extent in the work of Isidore of Seville and Bede. The subsequent importance of Bede's *De Temporibus*, 703, and especially of *De Temporum Ratione*, 725, has tended to overshadow earlier Irish interest in computistics. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín has confirmed the mid-seventh-century Irish provenance of the *computus* used by Bede, however, and has commented on the prodigious accumulation of computistical and related exegetical materials stimulated in Ireland by the Easter dating controversy and already evident in the letter of Cummián, *De controversia paschali*, c. 632.⁴⁵ Computistics was not narrowly confined to technical explanations of the solar calendar and the Paschal table but, in revealing the divine order underlying the whole of creation, was closely allied to exegesis.

Isidore's *De natura rerum*, which was used in seventh-century Irish exegesis and influenced Bede's early work of the same title, contains diagrams which are didactically referred to in the text. Surviving manuscripts show *rotae*, whether copies of antique models or devised by Isidore, which, demonstrate the harmony of the year and the seasons, the harmony of the elements, the harmony

44 Paris, B.N. lat. 11561, fol. 132r, note 31.

45 D. Ó Cróinín, 'The Irish provenance of Bede's *computus*', *Peritia* 2 (1983), 229–47; M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (ed.), *Cummián's Letter De controversia paschali, together with a related Irish computistical tract De ratione computandi* (Toronto 1988).

of the macrocosm and microcosm and the attempt to render the four-part world as a cube. Carolingian and later scriptoria reproduced these and other didactic diagrams in compilations of computistical and related materials. Text-book schemata could either serve as frameworks for substantial explanatory inscriptions or they 'could give visual expression to broad syntheses of a given subject; to show correlations between its parts, and even to indicate interpretations of various themes' and could become detached from their text and serve as frontispieces.⁴⁶ [82] This tradition was continued particularly in the tenth-century scriptorium of Fleury which had close ties with the Anglo-Saxon monastery at Ramsey.

Byrhtferth, a monk at Ramsey, compiled a computistical manual c. 1011 which is preserved in an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon manuscript, Oxford, Bodl. Lib. Ashmole Ms 328. One of its several diagrams is now damaged but thought to be substantially reproduced on fol. 7v of the large computistical miscellany in Oxford, St John's College Lib. Ms 17, c. 1110 (Figure 4.2). Byrhtferth's diagram, as Madeline Caviness has noted, is much closer in format to the geometrical framework of the elongated rhombus and medallions in the Carolingian *Maestas* image (Figure 4.1) than is the *tetragonus mundus* in the Carolingian astronomical manuscript in Vienna usually cited for comparison.⁴⁷ Byrhtferth's closely inscribed diagram, *De concordia mensium atque elementum*, sets out the harmony of the macrocosm and the microcosm through correlating various quaternities of time, space and matter: the four seasons, together with their related months and parts of the Zodiac; the four cardinal directions and winds; the four elements and their properties; the four humours and ages of man. The inner of the two rhomboid figures on which the diagram is constructed is inscribed with the name of Adam. One large letter of the name appears at each of the four cardinal points of the lozenge which are also inscribed with the Greek equivalents of the letters – Anathole, Disis, Arcton, Mesembrios – and the [83] names of the cardinal directions they represent – *oriens*, *occidens*, *aquilo*, *meridies*. These in turn are correlated with inscriptions of the four seasons, winds and elements inscribed in circular medallions at the cardinal points of the outer lozenge. At the centre of Byrhtferth's diagram, within the lozenge inscribed with Adam's name, is a small representation of the Creator-Logos in the form of a combined cross and *chi-rho* monogram of Christ's title.

46 O.K. Werckmeister, 'Three problems of tradition in pre-Carolingian figure style: from Visigothic to Insular illumination', *Proceedings of Royal Irish Academy* 63 C 5 (1963), 167–89, at 167–75, pl. 21, 22, 25; Harry Bober, 'An illustrated medieval school-book of Bede's *De natura rerum*', *Journal of Walkers Art Gallery*, 19–20 (1956–57), 65–97, 74–77.

47 Madeline Caviness, 'Images of divine order and the third mode of seeing', *Gesta* 22 (1983), 99–121 at 108, notes 48, 50–51, p. 119, 20; Oxford, St John's College Library MS 17, fol. 7v; M.R. Evans, *Medieval drawings* (London-Toronto 1969) pl. 66. C. and D. Singer, 'Byrhtferth's diagram', *Bodleian Quarterly Record* 2 (1917) 47–51; P.S. Baker, 'Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion* and the computus in Oxford, St John's college 17', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 10 (1982), 123–42.

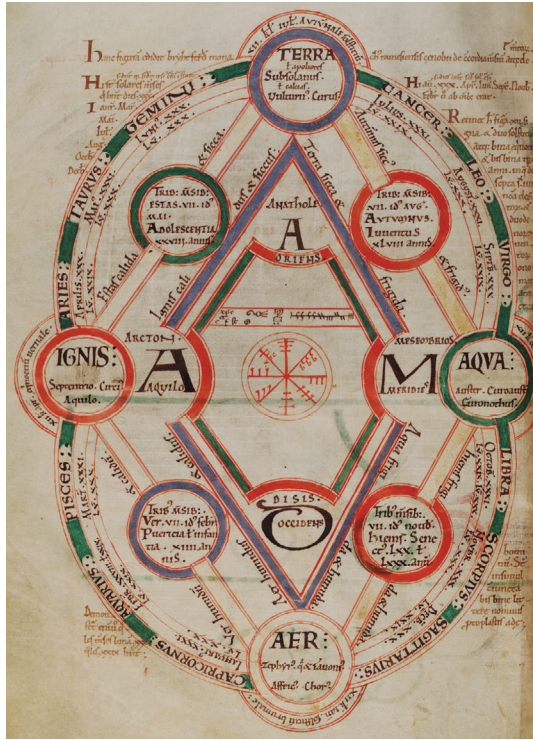


Figure 4.2 'Byrhtferth's Diagram'. St John's College Library, Oxford. MS 17, fol. 7v.

Several *rotae* in Byrhtferth's Manual also set out concordant quaternities discussed in the text and his closing treatise on the symbolism of numbers dwells on the importance of the number four which is 'reverently upheld' by the existence of four letters in the name of Christ (Deus) and in the name of the first created man. The Greek letters of Adam's name are related to the four regions of the world and are given a detailed numerological interpretation; the number four is honoured in the four winds, elements, seasons and ages of man and, significantly, it is 'adorned with the doctrines of the four evangelists' who are identified with the four creatures of Ezekiel's vision.⁴⁸

The learning represented in 'Byrhtferth's diagram' has been broadly described as coming from Bede⁴⁹ but the reiteration of quaternities which characterises both

48 S.J. Crawford (ed.), *Byrhtferth's Manual edited from Bodl. Ms Ashmole 328*, Early English Text Society O.S. 177 1929, vol. 1, 198–204.

49 By R.W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and other studies* (Oxford 1970), in his caption to pl. IV, another version of Byrhtferth's diagram in London, BL Harley MS 3667 from Peterborough Abbey c. 1100.

the diagram and part of Byrhtferth's *Manual* is not a striking feature of Bede's work. The pseudo-Jerome's *Expositio* and other works in the Hiberno-Latin tradition outlined here do, however, combine microcosm and macrocosm, cosmic quaternities and the cosmic tetragrammaton of Adam's name and, moreover, in the context of describing the four evangelists and their revelation of Christ their centre and source. [84]

Jerome's *Plures fuisse* text, whose proximity to *Maiestas* pictures prefacing Carolingian gospel books helps explain their depiction of Christ enthroned at the centre of a fourfold gospel harmony, simply does not feature cosmic quaternities and cannot of itself explain the use of a dominant rhomboid framework in this iconography. Hiberno-Latin exegesis, however, which used cosmic quaternities to demonstrate the divine order and authority underlying the fourfold gospel, was certainly known to Carolingian commentators. The pseudo-Jerome's *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum* survives in over forty early continental copies. It seems likely that this Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition, and possibly Insular computistics and schoolbook schemata, may have contributed to the formulation of the Carolingian quadripartite images of gospel harmony which incorporate the lozenge as a cosmological symbol. Before considering whether the rhombus which is incorporated in the very different pictorial idiom of a four-symbols page in the Book of Kells fol. 290v (Plate 3.8) reflects such a tradition, it may be useful to look first at a more readily legible example of the Insular four-symbols iconography.

The Trier Gospels is an eighth-century manuscript from the same Echternach scriptorium as the Augsburg Gospels and the Maeseeyck Gospels which have already been discussed in connection with Ailerán's poem and the origins of the beast canon tables. In the frontispiece of the Trier Gospels four evangelist symbols of the rare Insular 'terrestrial' type stand in the quadrants of a Cross (Plate 4.1).⁵⁰ At the four cardinal points the arms of the Cross meet and merge with the rectangular frame. Four small human heads, now faint and often unnoticed, are placed just beyond the four corners of the frame, looking inwards. There are comparisons for these heads in the Insular and possibly Irish gospel book fragment at Turin and in the later Anglo-Saxon pictures in [85] the Æthelstan Psalter. Both these examples depict the Second Coming, the Æthelstan Psalter fol. 21v with some quite specific iconographic allusions to the apocalyptic vision, including the four angels standing at the four corners of the earth and holding the four winds (Revelation 7: 1) and the related gospel prophecies of the gathering of the elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth (Mark 13: 27; Matthew 24: 31).⁵¹ The four human heads placed outside the corners of the upper frame of

50 Trier, Domschatz, Codex 61, fol. lv, Alexander, cat. 26, pl. 114, fol. 5v (Tetramorph) pl. 110; N. Netzer, *Cultural interplay in the eighth century. The Trier Gospels*, 103–111, pl. 1–4.

51 Turin, *Biblioteca Nazionale*, Cod. O.IV.20, fol. 2a: Alexander *Insular MSS*, cat. 61, pl. 280; London, B.L., Cotton, Galba A. XVIII, fol. 21v in E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon manuscripts 900–1066* (London 1976) cat. 5, pl. 33; J. O'Reilly, 'Early medieval text and image: the wounded and exalted Christ', *Peritia* 6–7 (1987–88), 72–118, at 84, 92–93, pl. 8.

fol. 21v have tendrils billowing from their mouths and are clearly derived from classical personifications of the winds. Similarly, the four winds which are combined with the four Apocalyptic beasts in the Trier Gospels frontispiece, give it an eschatological as well as a cosmic dimension. Like the portrait bust of Christ within the medallion at the centre of the Cross, the personifications of the winds indicate that Mediterranean as well as Insular pictorial influences were at work in the Echternach scriptorium.

These additional figural components, as well as the context in which the Trier frontispiece is placed, greatly assist in reading this version of the Insular four-symbols image. The four evangelist symbols all look right towards the facing page and the handsome opening of Jerome's *Plures fuisse* which is then followed by a second illustration facing the *Novum opus*, fols. 5v–6. This second image is identified by inscription with the names of the four evangelists but depicts a single tetramorphic figure with features of all four evangelist symbols, evoking Ezekiel's vision in which each of the four living creatures has the features of all four (Ezekiel 1: 10). The Trier frontispiece in contrast shows four distinctively individual beasts, each inscribed with its name – *homo*, *leo*, *vitulus* and *aquilo* – yet their fourfold [86] harmony is exemplified in the quadripartite world in which they are set with its emphasis on the four cardinal points, four corners and four winds (Plate 4.1). The Insular adaptation of the Early Christian convention of reading the exalted Cross as an image of the glorified Christ enables the four-symbols page to be read as an evocation of the apocalyptic vision of the four living creatures around the throne of Christ's majesty. The idea of Christ as the source and fount of the fourfold Gospel taken out to the four parts of the world is conveyed both by the positioning of the beasts in the four corners and by the decorative golden interlace which flows continuously from the central portrait medallion, along the four arms of the Cross to the four cardinal points and into the border of the quadrangular world described by the image.

The modern reader of the four-symbols page in the Book of Kells fol. 290v is denied the kind of aids to interpretation offered in the case of the Trier Gospels four-symbols frontispiece by Trier's additional figural images such as the four winds and the central bust of Christ, by the use of inscriptions and the proximity of Jerome's prefatory texts. Readers of the Book of Kells image are instead confronted with a magnificent piece of largely abstract design. A stepped cross has been set diagonally across the page. At the centre of this great X shape which spans fol. 290v is a richly decorated lozenge (Plate 3.8). The four cardinal points and four corners of the outer rectangular frame are given marked decorative emphasis. The symbols of the four evangelists are placed in the four cardinal positions, entirely filling the triangular spaces between the four arms of the Cross which radiate from the four sides of the lozenge. If read in the standard Vulgate order used in the text of the Book of Kells the symbols of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, positioned to the north, west, south and east of the central lozenge, form a circular unity, like a *rota*, clearly beginning with the frontally-presented symbol of Matthew at the top. The diagonals are

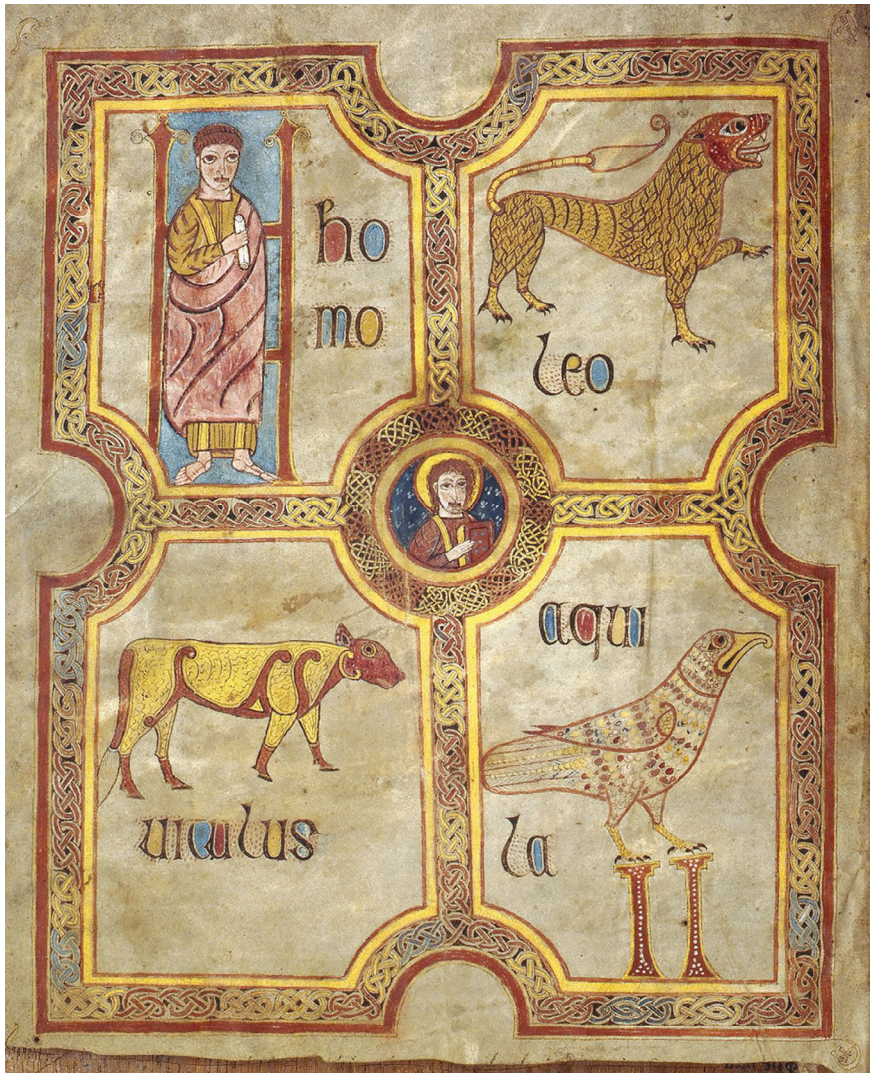


Plate 4.1 The Trier Gospels. Hohe Domkirche Trier, Cod. 61, fol. 1v (Photo: Rita Heyen).

extended beyond the four corners of the frame by four leonine heads, all turned in the same direction, suggesting a clockwise motion [87] around the border. In a well-known diagram of celestial harmony preserved in a twelfth-century manuscript (Rheims, B. Mun. MS 672, fol. 1) the splayed arms and legs of a human figure span the page forming its diagonals and extend beyond the frame of the heavens to meet directly at the four corners with the four named winds. They are rough-haired winged heads all facing and blowing clockwise.⁵² In some examples, including the Hereford *mappa mundi*, the winds are depicted by animal heads. It is possible that the four highly stylised leonine heads with protruding tongues in the Kells picture represent an Insular decorative adaptation of the convention.

The incorporation of a portrait bust of Christ at the centre of the Cross, seen in the sixth-century apsidal mosaic of San Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna and adapted to the context of the Insular four-symbols page in the frontispiece of the Trier Gospels, had Early Christian variants which may help explain the Insular image. In the restored vault mosaic of the archepiscopal chapel in Ravenna four caryatid angels stretch from the corners to the centre, their bodies forming a large diagonal-cross; they support a central medallion containing, not a portrait, but the monogram of Christ, the *chi-rho*. The four evangelist symbols are arranged around it in the triangular spaces formed by the diagonal cross. In an apsidal chapel mosaic in the Roman church of Santo Stefano Rotunda, c. 645, a portrait bust medallion of Christ is placed over the top of an exalted, jewelled Cross which has a rhomboid shape at its centre. It may be argued that in some Insular four-symbols pages the place and possibly the function of the portrait medallion of Christ is assumed by a symbol. The motif of a stepped cross (i.e. a cross with small square projections at its four angles) is repeatedly featured in the interlaced background and on the terminals of the double-barred Cross on 1v of the Book of Durrow. It directly faces the earliest surviving example of the Insular four-symbols page: on fol. 2r the cosmological Cross, with expanded terminals meeting the [88] frame and the four evangelist symbols disposed in the rectangular spaces, has four tiny square projections in its four angles and, at its very centre, a lozenge shape is formed by the decorative interlace. This focus on a symbolic inner cross or lozenge is not a feature of the four-symbols pages in the Lichfield Gospels, p. 219, or the Book of Armagh, fol. 32v, but a small, equilateral stepped cross is placed at the centre of the main cross on the four-symbols page prefacing Matthew's gospel in the Book of Kells, fol. 27v (Plate 4.2) and a tiny lozenge within a medallion is at the centre of the cross-symbols page in the MacDurnan Gospels, fol. 1v.

The closest pictorial parallel to the distinctive form of the Cross on the four-symbols page on fol. 290v in the Book of Kells is with the *chi-rho* monogram

⁵² M.W. Evans, *Medieval Drawings*, pl. 80.

on fol. 34r in the same manuscript. The X-shaped initial letter *chi*, incorporating a diagonally-disposed stepped cross and a large golden rhombus at its centre, spans the entire page highlighting the name of Christ which here opens the gospel account of the Incarnation (Matthew 1: 18). The image has been interpreted as revealing the incarnate Christ to be the divine Creator.⁵³

Another important element in deciphering the four-symbols page on fol. 290v is its context within the manuscript. It is one of three surviving cross-symbols pages in the Book of Kells. Those positioned before the gospels of Matthew and Mark on fols. 27v (Plate 4.2) and 129v use the conventional upright cross spanning the four cardinal points of the frame; the diagonal *chi*-Cross on fol. 290v with the lozenge at its centre is placed before the gospel of John. It may be read not simply as a gospel harmony page prefacing an individual gospel but as the first image in a three-page sequence: it is immediately followed by a double opening of an author portrait of the evangelist facing the opening words of his [89] gospel: *In principio erat verbum* [. . .]. (fols. 291v–292r). The words, which recall the opening of Genesis and the account of creation, encapsulate the profound theological insight of John's prologue to his gospel, namely the identity of the Creator-Logos and the incarnate Christ: 'In the beginning was the Word [. . .] and the Word was God [. . .] All things were made by him [. . .]' (John 1: 1, 3), 'And the Word became flesh' (John 1: 14).

As early as Irenaeus patristic interpretation of the four living creatures as figures of the four evangelists used the evidence of creation itself, in which the Creator is also revealed, in order to demonstrate the divinely-inspired unity of the Gospel's fourfold testimony. Irenaeus's allusion to the divine Artificer who made all things in due proportion and measure is to Wisdom 11: 21, *omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti*. This text had an enormously important exegetical history, particularly in commentaries on the account of creation in Genesis, a connection which was utilised by St Augustine in his influential commentary on St John's gospel and specifically on its opening lines. Supporting his exposition on the uncreated, all-creating Word in verses 1–2, he cites Wisdom 11: 21 as a gloss on John 1: 3, *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nihil*. Wisdom 11: 21 is therefore used to show how all things were made by the Creator-Logos, namely by measure, number and weight.⁵⁴

53 S. Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy: the *chi-rho* page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio* 36 (1980), 139–59 at 142–43; cf. Werckmeister, *Irisch-northumbrische Buchmalerei*, 147–70, citing Irenaeus *Adversus haereses* 3.18.3; 4.17.6.

54 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3.11.8. For the patristic idea of the numerical and geometric plan of creation as 'the first and highest knowable expression of the Divine Majesty' see Harry Bober, *In principio. Creation before time*, in M. Meiss (ed.), *De artibus opuscula XL. Essays in honour of Erwin Panofsky* (New York 1961), 13–28. Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium*, ed. R. Willems, CCL 36 (1954), *Tractatus* I, 13. James McEvoy, *Biblical and Platonic measure in John Scottus Eriugena*, in B. McGinn and W. Otten (edd.), *Eriugena* (Notre Dame and London 1994), 153–77.



Plate 4.2 The Book of Kells. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS A.1.6 (58) fol. 27v.

Robert Stevick has demonstrated that integrated sets of proportional measures underlie the construction of Cross carpet-pages and the frames of pages depicting the evangelists and/or their symbols in some major Insular gospel books. [90] His tentative conclusion that the rationality of such mathematical designs may serve 'as a fitting emblem for a rational cosmos wrought by a rational creator' is, like the idea that the square and the lozenge can function as cosmological symbols of the divine Creator, impossible to prove from the evidence of the gospel books alone.⁵⁵ However, when viewed in the context both of the cosmological interests evident in Insular works of exegesis and computistics, and of the common patristic harmonisation of the Platonic idea of the construction of the four elements of the world on numerical principles with the biblical characterisation of creation by aspects of divine measure (Wisdom 11: 21), two of Stevick's examples are pertinent to the present discussion. The Cross carpet-page on fol. 126v of the Augsburg Gospels (formerly of Schloss Harburg) has a prominent square at its centre formed by the stepped outline of the cross. Four expanded, square terminals touch the four cardinal points of the rectangular frame and the four equal areas between the arms of the cross are filled with four symmetrical panels ornamented with lozenge-shaped key patterns. The Cross carpet-page in the Lindisfarne Gospels fol. 210v has an equilateral cross at the centre, terminals marking the four cardinal points and four rectangular panels filled with lozenge-shaped key patterns set in the four angles of the cross. These two carpet pages of strongly quadripartite design are thus very similar to Cross symbols-pages except that abstract symmetrical shapes take the place of the four evangelist symbols around the Cross. Stevick notes that these two carpet-pages use construction methods unusual within the mathematically harmonised designs of Insular gospel books. The Augsburg page, the only carpet page in the manuscript, is not strictly modular but results from an 'orderly manipulation of the numbers of the first triad'; the Lindisfarne example is the only one of the five surviving carpet-pages in the Lindisfarne Gospels which not only gives the illusion of a symmetrical design but, in spite of the problems posed [91] by a rectangular page, actually has a perfect symmetrical plan, a design 'congruent with an "arithmetical" ratio'.⁵⁶ Both the Augsburg Gospels fol. 126v and the Lindisfarne Gospels fol. 210v directly face the opening words of St John's gospel. The particular nature of the mathematical harmony underlying their abstract carpet designs may well have arisen from Insular familiarity with patristic discussion of measure and number in divine creation inspired by that gospel text's traditional association with the Genesis account of, creation and with Wisdom 11: 21.

The Wisdom text was also frequently cited in computistical works. It is twice quoted in Byrhtferth's Manual in descriptions of the work of the Creator and is

55 Robert Stevick, 'The Harmonic Plan of the Harburg Gospels Carpet-page', *Artibus et Historiae* 23 (1991), 39–51 at 49.

56 Robert Stevick, *The Earliest Irish and English Bookarts. Visual and poetic forms before A.D. 1000* (Philadelphia 1994), 196–210, figs. 13.8–13.11.

directly related to the triad of the first three numbers, sacred to the Trinity, and to the cosmic quaternities in which divine harmony and order may be discerned, as in the work of the four evangelists represented by the four creatures of Ezekiel's vision. It has been seen that the numerological and cosmological aspects of the exegesis on the four gospels had particularly attracted Hiberno-Latin inheritors of the patristic tradition and provided them with images of Christ himself. The Kells four-symbols page on fol. 290v is illuminated; not only by the rich exegetical associations of the opening words of St John's gospel on fol. 292r, but by the iconographic traditions evident in the accompanying author portrait on fol. 291v.

Twelfth-century and later medieval figured diagrams use the human body as a structure on which to inscribe the harmony of cosmic quaternities and of microcosm and macrocosm. The figure of Christ or Adam is shown in syndesmos pose, that is, with arms outstretched, binding creation together. A sub-category of diagrams depict the human figure as partly concealed behind a geometric shape such as a *mappa mundi* with only the head, extended hands and feet [92] protruding at the cardinal points.⁵⁷ The well-known Anglo-Saxon convention of depicting the Creator-Logos as a figure partially concealed by his creation is an early variant within an ancient tradition.

On the portrait page of John the Evangelist of fol. 291v immediately following the four-symbols page in the Book of Kells, four equilateral crosses project into the frame at its four cardinal points. Decorative panels in sets of fours show the quadriform nature of this world. From behind the cardinal points of the frame emerge the head, hands and feet of a figure whose body remains concealed beneath the framed picture. This cruciform figure underlies and holds together the quadripartite world and may suggest both its divine creation and its redemption. Overlaying the concealed figure is the author portrait, as imposing as an enthroned *Maiestas Domini*. The haloed figure sits with pen poised and holds up a gospel book, which is emblazoned with a chi-inscribed lozenge; the image suggests in authorship of the divine word another act of creation. The four-symbols picture on the preceding page, fol. 290v, may be read in this larger context (Plate 3.8). The lozenge at the centre of the great *chi*-Cross attended by the four evangelist symbols could have functioned for contemporary monastic readers not only as a cosmological image but as an aniconic representation of Christ the Creator-Logos holding together the quadripartite world at the centre and also present throughout his fourfold creation and his fourfold Gospel.

Unlike a diagram, the Insular four-symbols page is a powerful evocation and celebration of a mysterious heavenly reality. It could also act as a mnemonic or aid to focus further meditation. It does not attempt to illustrate literally in [93] figural terms the various scriptural and cosmic quaternities which characterise

57 A. Esmeijer, *Divina quaternitas. A preliminary study in the method and application of visual exegesis* (Amsterdam 1978), 97–104, pl. 80–81; O. Werckmeister, *Irish-northumbische Buchmalerei*, 143–46, pl. 26, pl. 34a–35b. Adelheid Heimann, 'Three illustrations from the Bury St Edmunds Psalter and their prototypes', *Jnl Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966), 39–59.

patristic and Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the four gospels but gives visual and symbolic expression to a shared understanding of the revelatory quality of number and harmony. There is an earlier Italian example of half-length winged evangelist symbols with attributes around an unframed Latin Cross and there are later derivatives⁵⁸ but the development of the geometrical and cosmological dimension of the framed image, its proliferation and refinement are Insular achievements. The mentality underlying the distinctive Insular gospel books' four-symbols image, particularly as developed in the Book of Kells, fol. 290v, finds some counterpart in early Insular exegesis in which the cosmological, numerological and especially quadripartite aspects of patristic interpretation of the four evangelists and their symbols are particularly emphasised and further developed.

58 Fifth-century mosaic in catacomb of S. Gennaro, Naples cited by Lawrence Nees, 'A fifth-century book cover and the origin of the four Evangelist symbols page in the Book of Durrow', *Gesta* 17 (1978), 308, figs 2–3. A twelfth-century Byzantine example, Paris, B.N., suppl. gr. 1335, fol. 75, with full-length wingless symbols, a quadripartite design and a cross meeting the frame is the closest parallel to the Insular type though it has a portrait bust of Christ at its centre. See N. Netzer, *Cultural Interplay in the Eighth Century*, pl. 104; cf. p. 239 for references to other derivatives: Cracow, Cathedral Chapter Lib. Ms 43, fol. 100v and Essen, Munsterschatz, p. 55.

‘KNOW WHO AND WHAT HE IS’ The context and inscriptions of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image

Uniquely among Insular Gospel book illuminations, the image of the Crucifixion in the Durham Gospels is framed by inscriptions.¹ About forty-four words may be made out, in addition to several words and phrases written within the picture area, making it the most heavily inscribed of Insular crosses, excepting only the Ruthwell Cross. The great Crucifixion image itself, although severely damaged, has been described by George Henderson as ‘the most metaphysically charged of all surviving Insular works of art’.² The origin of the inscriptions and the circumstances in which they were brought together with the image are not known. The present paper offers an interpretation of the Crucifixion scene and its related texts in the context of contemporary developments in the Christological debates which had long continued after the Council of Chalcedon, 451.³

Christological debate and the image of the Crucifixion

The Council’s definition of faith endorsed the dogmatic letter or *Tome* of Pope Leo the Great and described it as being in agreement with ‘great Peter’s confession’, meaning Peter’s divinely inspired recognition of the Saviour’s human and divine natures: ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’ (Matthew 16:16), which Leo had quoted.⁴ Leo insisted his *Tome* taught nothing new and did not depart from the

- 1 Durham Cathedral Library, MS A.II. 17, fol. 38a verso. For the continuing debate on its origins and date, see C. Verey, T.J. Brown and E. Coatsworth (eds), *The Durham Gospels, Early English manuscripts in facsimile*, vol. 20 (Copenhagen, 1980), reviewed by D. Ó Cróinín, *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 352–62; C. Verey, ‘A Northumbrian text family’ in J.L. Sharpe and K. van Kampen (eds), *The Bible as book: the manuscript tradition* (London, 1998), pp. 105–22; M. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels society, spirituality and the scribe* (London, 2003), pp. 260–62, 401–402, for the view that the Durham Gospels is a Northumbrian manuscript, though representing an earlier phase of development than the Lindisfarne Gospels ‘and remaining closer to its Columban roots’.
- 2 G. Henderson, *Vision and image in Early Christian England* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 144.
- 3 An early version of this paper was given at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, July 2001.
- 4 N.P. Tanner (ed. and trans.), *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, 2 vols (London and Georgetown, 1990), i, pp. 83–87 at pp. 80, 85.

apostolic rule of faith maintained by the fathers and in the creed, but its powerful rhetorical summary and formulation of belief on the central issues of the Incarnation and human redemption was important throughout the ensuing stages of the extended Christological controversy. Chalcedon had condemned Eutyches and the view that Christ has only one nature (Monophysitism), but successive emperors sought theological compromise in order to reconcile the many disaffected Monophysites in their eastern provinces.⁵ Rome and the West came to regard Chalcedon as a defining expression of the faith of the Gospel, and Leo and his successors, through whom Peter had spoken, as its particular guardians. The *Tome* became increasingly important for Leo’s successors in the period of deteriorating relations between papal Rome and imperial Constantinople during the seventh and early eighth centuries when Constantinople [301] periodically gave forceful sanction to the belief that Christ had only one will (Monotheletism). In refuting this belief Pope Martin I’s Lateran Council of 649 upheld the theology of Chalcedon and cited the *Tome* of Leo.

The later stages of the controversy were well known in Insular ecclesiastical circles through the visits to Rome of influential pilgrims, including Benedict Bishop, Ceolfrith and Hwaetberht of Wearmouth-Jarrow, Wilfrid of York and Acca of Hexham, through the arrival in Britain of official figures sent by the papacy, Theodore of Tarsus in 668 and John the archcantor of St Peter’s in 679, and through incoming texts from Rome, including the *acta* of the Lateran Council [of 649] and the *Liber pontificalis*. Theodore and the bishops of Britain at the Council of Hatfield, 679, recorded their support of Chalcedon and the Lateran Council’s profession of faith.

The central theological concepts of Chalcedon and the *Tome*, and their spiritual implications, evident in the writings of Bede, had been disseminated through Leo’s letters and sermons and the work of those he closely influenced, including Cassiodorus’s commentary on the Psalms and, notably, the pastoral theology of Gregory the Great.⁶ Éamonn Ó Carragáin has vividly shown the importance for Insular culture particularly the Ruthwell Cross, of the influence of Roman works of art, inscriptions, liturgical developments, and the cults of the Virgin and the Cross, promoted by the papacy in the seventh and early eighth centuries as part of the expression and defence of Chalcedonian orthodoxy.⁷

In the literature of the Christological controversies of the early Church the image of the crucified Christ functioned as a visual *credo*. It was used in the *Tome*

5 Standard works on the theology of the Chalcedonian settlement include J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian doctrines*, 5th ed (London, 1977), pp. 310–43 and A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian tradition*, 2 vols (London, 1965), i, pp. 460–91, 541–57.

6 D. Ganz, ‘Roman manuscripts in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England’, *Roma fra oriente e occidente. Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo*, 49 (2002), 604–47 at 612–20; C. Straw, *Gregory the Great: perfection in imperfection* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 147–61.

7 É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: liturgical images and the Old English poems of the ‘Dream of the Rood’ tradition* (London 2005), pp. 223–66; M. Werner, ‘The cross-carpet page in the Book of Durrow: the cult of the True Cross, Adomnán and Iona’, *Art Bulletin*, 72 (1990), 174–223.

of Leo the Great, in which he articulated belief in the human and divine natures of Christ as inseparably united in one person at the Incarnation, ‘We must say this again and again: one and the same is truly Son of God and truly son of man’. Yet the characteristics of the divine and human natures remained distinct and unconfused within that union: ‘one and the same *Mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5), could both on the one hand die and on the other be incapable of death’.⁸ Leo explained that Christ’s sufferings on the cross therefore pertained to the weakness of his human nature but, because his divine and human natures were united in one person, it was possible to speak of the Son of God having been crucified and buried.

Extreme Monophysite opinion is represented in the *Tome* by Eutyches, whom Leo learned was unable ‘to recognize our [human] nature in the only-begotten Son of God’. Following scriptural and patristic custom in using physical sight as a metaphor for spiritual insight, Leo reasoned that the brightness of the manifest truth had been darkened by Eutyches’s own peculiar blindness: he could not see that Christ’s experiences of weakness, pain, and death were proper to his humanity, his miracles and glorious resurrection to his divinity. Nor did he recognise that a fundamental tenet of belief, that the suffering of Christ on the cross secured human redemption, necessitated belief in Christ’s humanity. Eutyches had perversely failed to understand the teaching of the scriptures on the Incarnation, to grasp the basic tenets of the Creed pronounced by baptismal candidates the world over, or [302] to understand the true nature of the source of the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. Leo painted a verbal picture for his correction: ‘Let him see [*videat*] what nature it was that hung, pierced with nails, on the wood of the Cross. With the side of the Crucified laid open by the soldier’s spear, let him identify the source from which the blood and water flowed, to bathe the Church of God with font and cup’.⁹

The iconography of the wounded and exalted Christ

The wounding of Christ’s side, described only in St John’s Gospel, is a pronounced feature of the particular Mediterranean iconographic type of the Crucifixion which the Durham Gospels image most resembles, but was not used as a means of emotively depicting the physical suffering and death of Christ. In various media from the late sixth-century Syriac Rabbula Gospels onwards, the crucified Christ in a sleeveless robe or *colobium* is shown in an upright *orans* position, his head usually slightly inclined, his eyes open. He is flanked by two figures, as if simultaneously receiving the sponge of vinegar, which was offered

8 *Epistula Papae Leonis ad Flavianum ep. Constantinopolitanum de Eutyche*: Tanner, *Ecumenical councils*, i, pp. 77–82 at p. 78.

9 *Videat quae natura transfixa clavis pependerit in crucis ligno et aperto per militis lanceam latere crucifixi intellegat unde sanguis et aqua fluxerit, ut ecclesia dei et lavacro rigaretur et poculo*. Tanner, *Ecumenical councils*, i, p. 81.

him on a hyssop or reed immediately before his death, and the thrust of the soldier’s spear administered only after his death (John 19:28–34).¹⁰ To note Mediterranean antecedents is not to diminish the originality of the Crucifixion picture in the Durham Gospels but to help suggest what is distinctive about the treatment of traditional exegetical themes in this, the earliest example of an iconographic type whose basic features, including the cup-shaped sponge, became common in Irish representations of the Crucifixion (Plate 1.1).¹¹

The Durham composition is stripped of the naturalistic landscape context and the figures of Mary, John, and the two thieves which the Mediterranean examples show. The tableau of Christ flanked by the spear-bearer and the sponge-bearer is isolated and transformed into a highly stylised, almost abstract linear design, honed to theological essentials. The horizontal beam of the cross is unusually wide and low, so that the four terminals of the cross reach to the rectangular frame, suggesting its cardinal points; the cross and frame are strongly delineated and unified by a dark green outline. Christ is shown with upright head and penetrating gaze, his body is coterminous with the cosmological cross. The two human figures below the arms of the cross and the two angelic beings above symmetrically flank the dominant central axis; the body of Christ unites the earthly and heavenly realms. The sponge is held up to his lips, the spear to his side. The iconography does not denote a particular moment in the Crucifixion narrative but signifies the unity in Christ’s person of his humanity, in which he experienced thirst, weariness, suffering and death, and his divinity, by which he triumphed over death. [303]

The patristic interpretation of Christ’s wound as the source of the life-giving sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, was used by Leo and well known to Insular writers.¹² Bede commented that Christ not only washed humanity’s sins when he shed his blood on the cross, but that each of the faithful is cleansed at

10 Examples include a seventh-century pilgrim’s painted reliquary box from the holy places and a wall-painting in the Theodotus chapel in S. Maria Antiqua, Rome, c. 750: G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art*, 2 vols (London, 1972), i, figs. 327–29. See L. Nees, ‘On the image of Christ crucified in Early Medieval art’ in M.C. Ferrari and A. Meyer (eds), *Il Volto Santo in Europa* (Lucca, 2005), pp. 345–73, which appeared after the TCD conference; I am grateful to Professor Nees for sending me a copy.

11 P. Harbison, ‘The bronze Crucifixion plaque said to be from St John’s (Rinnagan), near Athlone’, *Journal of Irish Archaeology*, 2 (1984), 1–18 at 13, which also notes how, from the ninth century, the lance-bearer is often positioned on the viewer’s right. R.N. Bailey, ‘A Crucifixion plaque from Cumbria’ in J. Higgit (ed.), *Early Medieval sculpture in Britain and Ireland*, BAR British Series 152 (Oxford, 1986), pp. 5–21. For the interpolation of John’s account of the spear in Matthew’s account of the sponge and vinegar in some Insular gospels see M. McNamara, ‘Bible text and illumination in St Gall Stiftbibliothek Codex 51, with special reference to Longinus in the Crucifixion scene’ in M. Redknap et al. (eds), *Pattern and purpose in Insular art* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 191–202 at p. 193.

12 For example, Cumman, following Cyprian’s *De unitate ecclesiae*: M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (eds), *Cumman’s letter ‘De controversia paschali’* (Toronto, 1988), p. 78. Bede in *De templo*, CCSL 119A, p. 166, like Leo’s *Tome*, follows Augustine, in *In Iohannis Evangelium*, *Tractatus* 120, 2, CCSL 36 (1954), p. 661.

baptism by the mystery of his passion, and that every day the memory of his passion is re-enacted on the altar and the bread and wine are transformed into the sacrament of his flesh and blood.¹³ The celebration of the liturgy, which presents every eucharist as a participation in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16–17) and a showing forth of his death until he comes again (1 Corinthians 11:24–26), and especially the liturgy of Holy Week and Easter, would have offered its own commentary on the sacramental allusions of the image of the Crucified with wounded side, placed in the context of a great liturgical Gospel book.

Christ, in a long-sleeved purple robe with golden folds, opens his arms on the cross in a priestly gesture of oblation.¹⁴ The Apocalyptic vision describes the son of man as ‘clothed in a garment down to the feet’, a text Bede interpreted as referring to the priestly garments of Christ, who offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father for our sakes on the altar of the cross.¹⁵ The scriptural image of Christ as both priest and sacrificial victim, and the patristic image of the altar of the cross, had been used by Pope Leo in showing that the Incarnation was central to that redemptive sacrifice: it was not as Son of God but in his humanity that Christ had offered himself and was thereby exalted.¹⁶ Both Leo and Bede linked the image to the exegetically and liturgically important hymn in Philippians 2:5–11, which describes Christ’s humble self-emptying at his Incarnation and Passion, not of his divine nature but of the glory due to his divinity, and of the consequent exaltation of his humanity.

John’s Gospel treats the Passion as an exaltation revealing Christ’s glory, the wounding of his side as the fulfillment of the prophecy, ‘They shall look on him whom they pierced’ (John 19:37, citing Zacharias 12:10). Patristic commentators further saw St John’s account of the crucifixion as a prophecy of the apocalyptic vision of Christ’s coming again in glory and judgment at the end of time, ‘when every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him’, and his divinity is proclaimed: ‘I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty’ (Revelation 1:7–8). Read literally, the *titulus* inscribed on the cross-head in the Durham picture, ‘This is Jesus the king of the

13 Bede, *Homiliae evangelii*, 1.15, CCSL 122, pp. 105–106 lines 18–28; J. O’Reilly, ‘The Book of Kells, folio 114r: a mystery revealed yet concealed’ in R.M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (eds), *The age of migrating ideas* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 106–14 at p. 113.

14 O.K. Werckmeister compared this form of the *orans* gesture – forearms extended, elbows close to the sides – with one of the ampullae in the Bobbio collection (6) from the holy places and with the Carndonagh Crucifixion slab: *Irish-northumbrian Buchmalerei des 8. Jahrhunderts und monastische Spiritualität* (Berlin, 1967), pls 16, 17.

15 Revelation 1:13. Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A, p. 245, lines 42–44. Bede also uses the image when expounding the titulus of the cross: *In Marcum*, 4, and *In Lucam*, 6, CCSL 120, pp. 120, 404. G. Caputa, *Il sacerdozio Dei fedeli secondo San Beda* (Vatican, 2003), 252–58.

16 Ep. 124.4, PL, 54. In the *Tome* Leo cites Hebrews 2:14 from the image of the faithful high priest destroying death and making reconciliation for the sins of the people; the image of the high priest, ‘tempted in all things like as we are, [but] without sin’ (Hebrews 4:15), is alluded to in the Chalcedon definition of faith: Tanner, *Ecumenical councils*, 1, pp. 77, 86.

Jews’ (Matthew 27–37), refers to one undergoing suffering and death, but the taunting words are transformed for the viewer who sees that the *titulus* is expanded by the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega* which flank the cross-head, and by the Latin words *initium* and *et finis* inscribed over the attendant cherubim. Insular exegesis and iconography elaborated patristic tradition in treating the literal text of the *titulus* of the cross as a mystery which, properly expounded, reveals an [305] insight into Christ’s true identity and the universal nature of his sovereignty.¹⁷ Durham Cathedral MS A.II. 10, fol. 3, inserts the title *Christ*, denoted by the Greek *chi-rho* abbreviation (xps), into Matthew’s Gospel account of the *titulus* on the cross.

Zacharias 12:10 is one of the texts inscribed beside the Crucifixion in an apocalyptic setting in S. Maria Antiqua, Rome, commissioned by Pope John VII (705–707) in a scheme which identified the contemporary papacy with the Christological orthodoxy defended by Leo the Great and by Martin I. But the Roman Crucifixion image differed significantly from that in the Durham Gospels in omitting the spear-bearer and sponge-bearer and originally it probably showed Christ stripped, not robed.¹⁸ Moreover, its inscription was in Greek, set out in a horizontal block, and composed of Old Testament passages prophetic of Christ’s glory.

There are, however, numerous Irish and Anglo-Saxon examples of the Early Christian convention of associating the apocalyptic title *alpha* and *omega* with the exalted cross or the *chi-rho*, as in the early seventh-century Codex Usserianus Primus, where the framed image appears at the end of a Gospel, the position also occupied by the crucifixion scene in the Durham Gospels.¹⁹ Two eighth-century Northumbrian examples in stone also have particular points of comparison. On the Berchtgyd stone (Hartlepool VI) the letters *alpha* and *omega* flank the head of an inscribed cross whose expanded, semi-circular terminals meet the frame. An incomplete cross slab at Billingham with similar cross type clearly shows the *alpha* in the upper left quadrant and, moreover, like the Durham Gospels picture, has a Latin inscription in Insular majuscule within the framing margin.²⁰ The difference is that, in the Durham Gospels, the divine title is applied to the crucified Christ. In a single image, therefore, Christ is shown as both wounded and exalted, the crucifixion itself as an exaltation.²¹

17 R. McNally, ‘The “tres linguae sacrae” in early Irish Bible exegesis’, *Theological Studies*, 19 (1958), pp. 395–403; O’Reilly, ‘The Book of Kells’, pp. 108–109, fig. 12.4.

18 P.J. Nordhagen, ‘John VII’s Adoration of the cross in S. Maria Antiqua’, *JWCI*, 30 (1967), 388–90 for this iconography. For recent bibliography: J. Osborne, J. Rasmus Brandt and G. Peorganti (eds), *Santa Maria Antiqua al Foro Romano cento anni dopo* (Rome, 2004); É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 255–57, pls 13, 14 and fig. 49, reproduces Joseph Wilpert’s watercolours (1916) and Wladimir De Grueney’s reconstruction of the lost scheme (1911).

19 J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular manuscripts 6th to the 9th century* (London, 1978), cat. 1, fig. 1.

20 E. Okasha, *Hand-list of Anglo-Saxon non-runic inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1971), cat. 48 and 9; C.D. Morris, ‘Two early grave-markers from Billingham’, *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 5 ser II (1974), pp. 49–56 at 52–54.

21 The paradox is a major theme in Early Medieval art: J. O’Reilly, ‘Early Medieval text and image: the wounded and exalted Christ’, *Peritia*, 6–7 (1987–88), pp. 72–118 at 89–91 for the role of the cherubim, pp. 94–100 for Longinus and the metaphor of sight.

The framed Gospel text, Matthew 28:17–20

A number of Insular manuscripts in some way highlight the ending of Matthew’s Gospel. The earliest example, Durham A.II. 10, fol. 3v, is pronounced. Matthew 28:16–20 is written in Insular minuscule at the bottom of the left-hand column of the page, distinguishing it from the majuscule script of the rest of the column and the manuscript (Plate 5.1). It is unlikely this was simply a space-saving device. The eleven lines have the same ruling as the rest of the page, they begin with an enlarged initial, and are written in a calligraphic script with clear word separation and space-fillers at the end. Furthermore, the parallel column of the same page is filled by a threefold interlaced frame containing the *explicit* of Matthew and *incipit* of Mark and, between them, the Lord’s Prayer in Greek, written in Latin characters. [306]

In the Durham Gospels the end of Matthew’s Gospel (Matthew 28:17–20), written in Insular majuscule, fills a whole page and is arranged within an interlaced cruciform frame on the recto of the Crucifixion image, with the *explicit* of Matthew written beneath the lower edge of the text’s frame (Figure 5.1). Robert Stevick was puzzled by the unique survival in the Durham Gospels of full-page decorations on recto and verso which, he thought, ‘are altogether different in subject and style’ and yet identical in both shape and size and in perfect registration, their outlines exactly matching.²² What, then, is the importance of this text and the likely reason for its close connection with the image of the Crucifixion in the Durham Gospels?²³

The passage describes the last of Christ’s post-Resurrection appearances in the forty days after Easter. Christ meets with his disciples in Galilee and announces that all power has been given to him in heaven and earth. He commands them to go and teach all peoples, ‘baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’, teaching them to observe all that he has commanded, and he assures them of his continuing presence, ‘Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the world’.²⁴ Other New Testament [307] references to baptism describe its being administered in the name of Christ; the Matthew passage alone contains the Trinitarian baptismal formula. It was, therefore, of importance in the early Christological controversies from the Council of Nicaea onwards, where it was used as a proof text of the Trinity and in asserting the divinity of Christ as the second

22 R. Stevick, ‘The Echternach Gospels’ evangelist-symbol pages: forms from “the two true measures of geometry”’, *Peritia*, 5 (1986), pp. 284–308 at 299, n. 32. Only the later Book of Kells links figural images with framed portions of the Gospel text.

23 The context of the miniature and of the manuscript is discussed by G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: the Insular Gospel-books, 650–800* (London, 1987), pp. 57–97.

24 *Et videntes eum adoraverunt: quidam autem dubitaverunt. Et accedens Iesus locutus est eis, dicens: Data est mihi omnis potestas in caelo et in terra: euntes ergo docete omnes gentes: baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii, et Spiritus sancti: docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis: et ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus, usque ad consummationem saeculi* (Matthew 28:17–20).

This image shows a full page from a medieval manuscript, featuring three large, ornate initials arranged vertically. Each initial is a capital letter filled with a dense, interlaced knotwork pattern in yellow, red, and blue. The text is written in a Gothic script within the loops of the initials. The initials are 'P', 'D', and 'A'. The text within the 'P' is: 'Pater noster qui es in celis deus pater omnipotens dominus rex creator conservator redemptor iudex creator conservator redemptor iudex'. The text within the 'D' is: 'Deus pater omnipotens dominus rex creator conservator redemptor iudex creator conservator redemptor iudex'. The text within the 'A' is: 'Amen'. The page is decorated with a wide border of interlaced knotwork in yellow, red, and blue. The background of the page is a light, aged parchment color.

Plate 5.1 Durham A.II.10 Gospel fragment. Reproduced by kind permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral. MS A.II.10, fol. 3v.

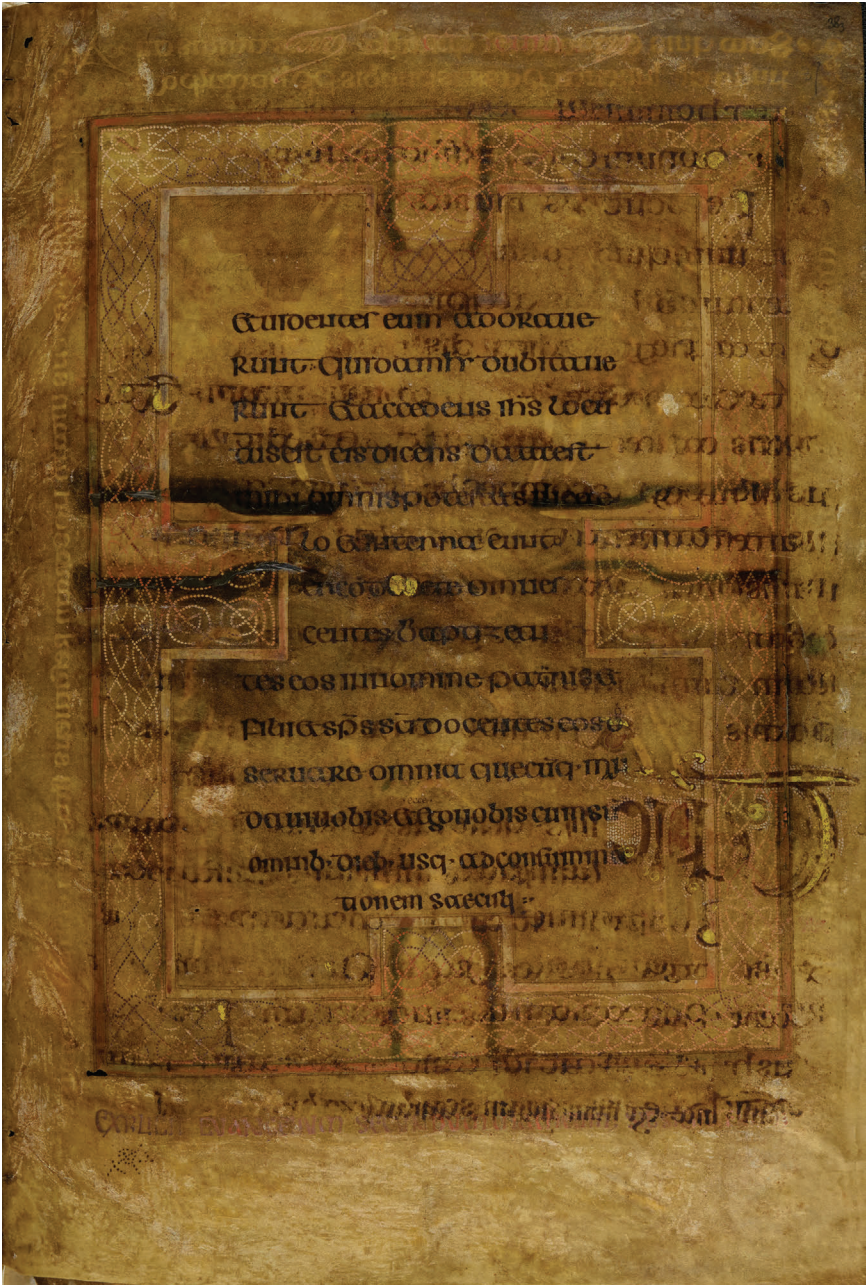


Figure 5.1 The Durham Gospels. Reproduced by kind permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral. MS A.II.17, fol. 38.3r.

Person of the Trinity.²⁵ Members of the Council of Chalcedon presented both their own [308] affirmation of the Trinitarian confession of faith and the role of Leo the Great, the mouthpiece of St Peter, in defending orthodox belief in the divine and human natures of Christ in one person, as part of the golden chain handed down by Christ through his disciples in the words quoted in Matthew 28:19–20.²⁶ The concept was given expression in the custom of enthroning a Gospel book to preside at ecumenical councils, a practice followed at the Lateran Council of 649 and at the Council of Hatfield in 679 whose proceedings record:

Having the most holy Gospels before us [. . .] we united in declaring the true and orthodox faith as our Lord Jesus Christ delivered it in the flesh to the disciples [. . .] and as it was handed down in the creed of the holy fathers and by all the holy and universal councils in general and the whole body of the accredited fathers of the catholic Church [. . .] We glorify our Lord Jesus Christ as they glorified him, adding and subtracting nothing.²⁷

In the Durham Gospels the image of Christ crucified, which is so closely linked with the text of Matthew 28:17–20, provides a distillation and visual summary of the Gospel handed down to the disciples, safeguarded through the ages and passed on to all the faithful in the liturgy of baptism through the profession of the Creed. It prompts meditation, not simply on the moment of baptism, but on its symbolic significance and the continuing process of inner conversion and repentance begun at baptism. The basic concept of baptism as a sharing in Christ’s death, and of that in turn being an image of the life of the baptised, is reiterated in a chain of Pauline texts:

For we are buried together with him by baptism into death that, as Christ is risen from the dead (*surrexit a mortuis*) by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3–4).

Paul proclaims it is necessary to be crucified with Christ and dead to sin in order to live with him, knowing that Christ, in rising again from the dead, has overcome

25 Athanasius, Ep. to Serapion, 1, 28, PG 26, 593. Insular writers understood its theological importance: Columbanus, *Instructio 1, De fide*, G.S.M. Walker (ed. and trans.), *Sancti Columbani opera* (Dublin, 1970), p. 61, ‘[. . .] that one God is a Trinity, the Saviour taught in the Gospel with the words, ‘Go now and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost’. The text was also often quoted by Insular writers as authority for the universal mission of the Church.

26 Ep. 98, PL 54, 951, 959. Matthew 28:19 was among the proof texts at the Lateran Council, R. Riedinger (ed.), *Concilium Lateranense a. 649 celebratum. Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, Series Secunda, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1984), p. 81.

27 C. Walter, *L’iconographie des conciles dans la tradition byzantine. Archives de l’orient chrétien*, 13 (Paris, 1970), p. 235; J.H. Creehan, ‘Patristic evidence for the inspiration of councils’, *Studia Patristica*, 9 (Berlin, 1966), pp. 210–15 at 210; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.17.

the dominion of death (cf. Romans 6:5–9; Colossians 2:12–15). He enjoins those who would rise with Christ to undertake a life of mortification on earth, to ‘seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God’ (Colossians 3:1–10). These texts were widely cited in liturgical, mystagogical and exegetical contexts.²⁸ Drawing on such traditions, Leo the Great linked Romans 6:3–5 to the sacrament of baptism, ordained by the risen Christ, as recorded in Matthew 28:19, and performed during the unified Easter liturgy of the *triduum sacrum*.²⁹ In a sermon on the Resurrection, Leo insisted that if we truly believe what we profess in the [309] Creed, then ‘in Christ we are crucified, we are dead, we are buried; on the third day, too, we are raised. Hence the Apostle says, “If you have risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting on God’s right hand” (Colossians 3:1–4)’; the faithful, therefore, need actively to appropriate the grace of their baptism and to fulfill their baptismal promises. Leo assures them that they will be given the means of doing this and will be sustained through the sacramental presence of Christ who promised, ‘Lo, I am with you always, even till the end of the world (Matthew 28:20)’.³⁰

The lateral and lower inscriptions of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image

Such traditions may help explain the significance of the Matthean text framed in the Durham Gospels and the context it provides for the Crucifixion image on the verso. The inscriptions around the frame of the image articulate the response required from the reader (Plate 1.1 and Figure 6.1). The eye is drawn to the enlarged initial of *Auctorem*, placed upright in the top right-hand corner of the page and aligned with the upper inscription, which indicates the starting-point of the lateral inscriptions. The initial word is then turned through ninety degrees and the next syllable and the rest of the line are written down the right side of the page (with the tops of the letters facing outwards from the frame of the image). Like the Latin inscriptions around the figural images on the broad sides of the Ruthwell Cross, the text on the left-hand side is laid out in the same direction as that on the right, facilitating reading, with the tops of the letters facing towards the frame and the image. The

28 Augustine, Ep. 55.2, 3 to Januarius, *CSEL* 34, for example, known to Cummián, Ceolfrith and Bede, had shown how the *transitus* from death to life had been consecrated in the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and cited a chain of Pauline texts on the theme of being crucified, buried and raised with Christ (Colossians 2:12, 3:1–4; Romans 6: 4, 6, 8:10–11; Ephesians 2:6).

29 Ep. 16, PL 54, 699, P. Schaff and H. Wace (trans.), *NPNF*, 12, p. 28.

30 Leo, *Tractatus* 72.3, *De Passione Domini*, *CCSL* 138A, pp. 443–44, lines 57–64: *nos in Christo crucifixi, nos sumus mortui, nos sepulti, nos etiam cum ipso die tertio suscitati. Vnde Apostolus dicit: Si consurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite, ubi Christus est in dextera Dei sedens, quae sursum sunt sapite, non quae super terram*. Schaff and Wace (trans.), *NPNF* 12, p. 185. Cf. Leo, *Tractatus* 26.2, *CCSL* 138, p. 126, lines 34–37. Bede’s homily for Easter, on the Gospel reading Matthew 28:16–20, is particularly apposite: *Homiliae evangelii*, 2.8, *CCSL* 122, pp. 233–38.

remaining line of text runs upright across the lower edge.³¹ The left-hand inscription (beginning *surrexit a mortuis*) is preceded and followed by space-filling scrolls. The scroll in the top left-hand corner neatly turns at right angles and so provides a visual link with the upper inscription, balancing the first syllable of *Auctorem* in the top right-hand corner. Whatever the age, origin or sources of the component texts, they are here visually presented as part of a continuous frame enclosing the image. The inscriptions are written in the same Insular majuscule script as the Gospel text of the manuscript, so have not simply been copied from a Roman model.

RIGHT *Auctorem mortis deiecens uitam nostram restituens si tamen conpatiamur*
Casting down the author of death renewing our life if we suffer along with him

LEFT *Surrexit a mortuis [. . .] sedet ad dexteram d(e)i patris*
He rose from the dead [and] sits at the right hand of God the Father

BOTTOM *Ut nos cum resuscitados simul et regnare faciat . . .*
So that when we have been restored to life he might make us also to reign with him.

The exhortatory text of the right-hand and bottom lines is cast in the first person plural. The opening words possibly recall the influence of the *Tome* which describes how ‘we could not overcome the author of sin and death (*peccati et mortis auctorem*)’ if Christ had not [310] redeemed our humanity.³² Bede, in a homily for the Easter Vigil, refers to Christ as having triumphed over the author of death (*mortis auctore*); this is directly linked with Christ’s words to his disciples in Mathew 28:18, ‘All power in heaven and earth has been given to me’, which Bede harmonises with the ending of Mark, ‘The Lord, when he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at God’s right hand (Mark 16:9)’. In *De templo*, alluding to images of the Crucifixion and its Old Testament prefiguring which Benedict Biscop had brought back from Rome, Bede again describes Christ, both in his miracles and exalted on the cross, as triumphing over the author of death.³³ The Durham lateral and lower inscriptions evoke several scriptural passages, though none exactly, which may have been recollected in a hymn or other metrical text; the phrase *sedet ad dexteram dei patris* (‘and sits on the right hand of God the Father’) has creedal echoes. The basic sentiment of the inscriptions is expressed in numerous New Testament texts, especially the Pauline epistles, but the belief that, ‘If we suffer with him (*conpatiamur*), together we shall reign’ is most concisely expressed in Romans 8:17 and 2 Timothy 2:12.³⁴

31 Transcribed in Verey, Brown and Coatsworth (eds), *The Durham Gospels*, p. 59.

32 Tanner, *Ecumenical councils*, i, p. 77, line 25.

33 Bede, *Homiliae* 2.7, CCSL 122, p. 228, lines 105–109, L.T. Martin and D. Hurst (trans.), *Bede: Homilies on the Gospels* (Kalamazoo, 1991), p. 62; *De templo*, 2, 19.10, CCSL 119A, p. 212, S. Connolly (trans.), *Bede: On the temple* (Liverpool, 1995), p. 91.

34 *Fidelis sermo: Nam si commortui sumus, et convivemus: si sustinebimus, et conregnabimus* (2 Timothy 2:11–12); *si tamen conpatiamur ut et conglorificemur* (Romans 8:17). Cf. Ephesians

In the age of persecution the response of the faithful to Christ’s exhortation in the Gospel that his disciples should take up the cross and follow him could take the form of literal martyrdom, but the concept of suffering with Christ essentially describes the life of all the baptised.³⁵ Cassian accordingly presented the monastic life, grounded in obedience and humility, as a daily crucifixion, a dying to the world and its desires, so that ‘you no longer live, but he lives in you who was crucified for you’ (cf. Galatians 2:20). Like one fixed to the gibbet of the cross, the monk directs the gaze of his heart to the place where he is sure that he will go.³⁶ The prologue of the Rule of St Benedict assures novices that ‘faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom’.³⁷ The *Regula monachorum* of Columbanus opens with images of the monk taking up his cross and following Christ (Matthew 10:38), being crucified to the world, being obedient, like Christ, up to death, ‘even the death of the Cross’ (here quoting Philippians 2:5–8).³⁸ In a densely allusive meditation on Galatians 2:20 in his *Instructiones*, Columbanus makes it clear that dying to self in order to live to Christ means the mortification of the will, following Christ’s example.³⁹

Writing to his monks in c. 610, Columbanus summed up the mysteries of salvation in a compressed exegesis of 1 Peter 2:21–22: [311]

This is the truth of the Gospel, that the true disciples of Christ crucified should follow him with the cross. A great example [*exemplum*] has been shown, a great mystery [*sacramentum*] has been declared; the Son of God willingly (for he was offered up because he himself willed it) mounted the cross as a criminal, leaving to us, as it is written, an example, that we should follow in his footsteps.

(Isaiah 53:7, 1 Peter 2:21)⁴⁰

1:17–2:9 (1:20): *suscitans illum a mortuis, et constituens ad dexteram suam in caelestibus*; Ephesians 2:6, *et conresuscitavit, et consedere fecit in caelestibus in Christo Iesu*.

35 Matthew 16:24; cf. Mark 8:34, Matthew 10:38; Luke 14:27.

36 *Institutes* 4. 34, 35: B. Ramsey (trans.), *John Cassian: the Institutes* (New York, 2000), 97–98; *Conlationes* 19.8: *Finis quidem coenobiotae est omnes suas mortificare et crucifigere uoluntates ac secundum euangelicae perfectionis salutare mandatum nihil de crastino cogitare*, E. Pichery (ed.), *Jean Cassien Conférences*, 3, SC 64, (Paris, 1959), p. 46.

37 [. . .] *in eius doctrinam usque ad mortem in monasterio perseverantes, passionibus Christi per patientiam participemus, ut et regno eius mereamur esse consortes*. T. Fry (ed.), *The Rule of St Benedict* (Collegeville, 1980), p. 166.

38 *Regula monachorum* 1, cf. 4, Walker, *Opera*, pp. 125, 127.

39 *Instructiones*, 10.2, Walker, *Opera*, p. 103, ‘Let us live to him who while he dies for us is life; and let us die to ourselves that we may live to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:15); for we cannot live to him unless first we die to ourselves, that is, to our wills’. In 10.3, p. 105, Columbanus quotes two Gospel texts, Matthew 26:29 and John 6:38, which were often cited to demonstrate Christ’s humble submission to the will of the Father and, therefore, the voluntary nature of his Passion.

40 Ep. 4.6, Walker, *Opera*, p. 31, lines 25–31. Columbanus here alludes to 1 Peter 2:21, which quotes Isaiah 53:9, ‘For unto this you are called, because Christ suffered also for us, leaving you an

He urged his monks, ‘Let us [. . .] be sharers in the Lord’s passion; for if we suffer together with him, together we shall reign’. The phrase, *si enim compati-mur; conregnabimus*, conflates 2 Timothy 2:12 and Romans 8:17.⁴¹ Columbanus’s spiritual counsel is succinctly related to his understanding of Christ’s divine and human natures, and the importance of Christ’s human will in voluntarily making that offering. He refers to the crucified Christ as *exemplum* and *sacramentum*, meaning that Christ offers both the human pattern to be imitated and the divine means by which alone this may be effected. Columbanus’s surviving letter on the contemporary phase of the prolonged Christological controversy emphatically affirmed the orthodoxy of Leo the Great and the Council of Chalcedon.⁴²

Leo in his letters and sermons on Christ’s two natures had made it clear that, ‘unless he were true God, he would not bring us a remedy; unless he were true man, he would not give us an example’. He described how the faithful should respond: ‘Our Saviour the Son of God provided for all that believe in him both a mystery and an example’; they enter into the mystery of their redemption through baptism, and follow his example through imitation.⁴³ Leo applied the terms to the crucifixion, showing how *sacramentum* and *exemplum* are intimately related, a concept which was to be particularly important in the work of Gregory the Great:

The cross of Christ, which was set up for the salvation of mortals, is both a mystery and an example (*sacramentum et exemplum*): a sacrament whereby the divine power takes effect, an example whereby man’s devotion is excited: for to those [i.e. the baptised] who are rescued from the prisoner’s yoke, redemption further procures the power of following the way of the cross by imitation.⁴⁴

example that you should follow his steps *who did no sin*’, but deftly links it with Isaiah 53:7, ‘He was offered because it was his own will’; this has the effect of reinforcing the reference to the crucified Christ as both teacher and redeemer, *exemplum* and *sacramentum*. This is close to Cassian’s *Conlationes*, 9, which emphasises the concord of the divine and human will. Leo, *Tractatus* 63.4, CCSL 138A, pp. 384–85, lines 64–73, links *exemplum et sacramentum* directly to 1 Peter 21–24.

41 Ep. 4.6, Walker, Opera, p. 32, lines 4–6: *ut simus participes Domini passionum; si enim compati-mur, conregnabimus*. Columbanus enumerates the contrition of heart, discipline of the flesh and spiritual humility, faith, hope and love essential to the task, but notes that ‘human goodness is not strong enough to reach the goal [. . .] unless the mercy of God also provide the will’.

42 ‘Christ our Saviour is true God eternal without time, and true man without sin in time [. . .] For we, in respect of the unity of the Person, in whom it pleased the fullness of deity to reside bodily, believe in one Christ, his divinity and humanity’. Ep. 5:13, Walker, Opera, p. 53, lines 3–5, 10–12. For the context of this letter, see P. Gray and M. Herren, ‘Columbanus and the Three Chapters controversy’, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 45 (1994), pp. 160–70.

43 Leo, *Tractatus* 63.4, CCSL 138A, pp. 384–85, lines 64–73.

44 Leo, *Tractatus* 72.1, CCSL 138A, pp. 441–42, lines 15–19: *Crux enim Christi, quae saluandis est impensa mortalibus, et sacramentum est et exemplum, sacramentum, quo uirtus impletur diuina, exemplum, quo deuotio/ incitatur humana, quoniam capituitatis iugo erutis, etiam hoc praestat redemptioni, ut eam sequi possit imitatio*. Schaff and Wace (trans.), NPNF 12, p. 184.

Read in the light of such traditions, the image of the Crucified in the Durham Gospels and the lateral and lower inscriptions that accompany it can be seen as together presenting both the means of humanity’s redemption and the way in which the faithful need individually to respond, through sharing in the suffering of Christ in order to rise with him. [312]

Before considering the contribution of the remaining inscription, it will be useful briefly to recall how redemption was understood and why the Chalcedonian view of Christ’s identity, central to this understanding, was so frequently reiterated during the seventh century. The *Tome* describes how humankind was originally made in the image of God, but had fallen under the thrall of sin and death. The restoration of that divine image required divine power and human sacrifice: ‘Overcoming the author of sin and death would be beyond us, had not he whom sin could not defile, nor death hold down, taken up our nature and made it his own’.⁴⁵ Using sonorous antithetical images to convey the paradox, Leo showed that when Christ assumed humanity at the Incarnation the proper character of the divine and human natures was maintained, unconfused, but the two natures were united in a single person:

Lowliness was taken up by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by eternity. To pay off the debt of our state, invulnerable nature was united to a nature that could suffer; so that in a way that corresponded to the remedies we needed, one and the same *Mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5), could both on the one hand die and on the other be incapable of death.⁴⁶

Crucially, Leo explained that Christ was without sin, not only in the holiness of his divine nature, which sin cannot defile, but in his humanity. In his unprecedented kind of birth, conceived from the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin, he assumed human nature as it had been formed by the Creator at the beginning; he therefore shared in our humanity in all respects except for the stain of sin and so was able to offer an acceptable sacrifice.⁴⁷

The theological language for explaining how, at the Incarnation, humanity itself was transformed by being united with divinity in one person, was further clarified by the 649 Lateran Council under Pope Martin I.⁴⁸ This was part of the safeguarding of Chalcedon against Monotheletism. With an impressive array of biblical, patristic and conciliar authorities, including Leo’s *Tome*, all cited in the proceedings, the Lateran Council denounced those who believed that Christ had only one (divine) will and principle of action. Monotheletes protested that if Christ

45 Tanner, *Ecclesiastical councils*, p. 77.

46 Ibid., p. 78.

47 Ibid., p. 79.

48 R. Riedinger (ed.), *Concilium Lateranense a. 649 celebratum* (Berlin, 1984), pp. 370–71, discussed by M. Hurley, ‘Born incorruptibly: the third canon of the Lateran Council, AD 649’, *Heythrop Journal*, 2 (1961), pp. 216–36.

had both a divine will and a human will, the two wills would be in opposition to one another. Against this view, the canons of the Lateran Council maintained that Christ was truly God and truly man, so therefore had two distinct wills, but because in his humanity he was incorrupt and without sin, his human will was not in conflict with his divine will. Rather, he was humbly obedient to the Father, even to the death of the cross (cf. Philippians 2:8), so that the two natures were in perfect accord in willing and effecting human redemption.

Pope Martin and his chief theological adviser were later dramatically seized and martyred, but the Lateran resolution was eventually to prevail.⁴⁹ The council of bishops ‘of the island of Britain’ meeting at Hatfield in 679 solemnly acknowledged the five universal councils and the 649 Lateran Council.⁵⁰ Hatfield was one of the provincial councils preparatory to the synod in Rome, which drew up the papal testimony of western [313] orthodoxy delivered at the Council of Constantinople in 680–81. The proceedings of Hatfield under Theodore of Canterbury, who had been a seasoned ‘Lateran professional’ and, it is thought, may even have been involved in the drafting of the Lateran Council, were witnessed by a visiting papal emissary, John the archcantor of St Peter’s.⁵¹ Accompanied from Rome by the returning pilgrims Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith, he had brought with him a copy of the *acta* of the Lateran Council of 649, which had been ‘chiefly directed against those who declared that only one will operated in Christ’. He arranged for a copy to be made in the monastery of Wearmouth, where he was teaching Roman chant and liturgy to monks from all over Northumbria.⁵² Bede, who entered Wearmouth as a child of seven, c. 680, was to grow up in a context where the issues were familiar. He later used the *acta* of the Lateran Council in his commentary on Mark and refuted Monotheletism.⁵³ His works of pastoral theology, especially the Gospel homilies on the Incarnation and Easter, make extensive use of key arguments and images from the Chalcedonian tradition.

The Council of Constantinople at last formally condemned, though did not finally extinguish Monotheletism. It affirmed the five general councils, including Chalcedon, and quoted Leo’s definition of the two natures which undergo no

49 For the seventh-century dispute between Rome and Constantinople, and Insular knowledge of it, see J. Herrin, *The formation of Christendom* (London, 1987), pp. 217–19, 252–90.

50 Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.17.

51 Thomas X. Noble, ‘Rome in the seventh century’ in M. Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore commemorative studies on his life and influence* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 68–87 at p. 87; M. Lapidge, ‘The career of Archbishop Theodore’, *ibid.*, pp. 19–26.

52 *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.18; É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 82, 87, 224–28.

53 For Bede’s use of the Lateran *acta*, M.W. Laistner, ‘The library of the Venerable Bede’, repr. in *The intellectual heritage of the Middle Ages* (Cornell, 1957), p. 142, noted by D. Ganz, ‘Roman manuscripts’, 618. R. Woolf, ‘Doctrinal influences in the Dream of the Rood’, *Medium Aevum*, 27 (1958), 137–53 at 150–1 for Bede on Monotheletism. He regarded it as a continuation of the heresy of Eutyches: *In Marcum* IV, CCSL 120, pp. 617–18, lines 881–90, on Mark 14:37–38, ‘This passage goes against the Eutychians who say there was one will operating in our Lord and Saviour, the one Mediator between God and man’.

division or confusion. It also approved the testimony of Pope Agatho’s preparatory synod in Rome and the letters sent to Constantinople by Agatho and the synod which explicitly endorsed Leo the Great’s *Tome* and the Lateran Council’s formulation concerning the unity of Christ’s divine and human wills and principles of action.⁵⁴ All three councils – Chalcedon, the Lateran and Constantinople – stated that Christ was ‘like us in all respects except for sin’ (cf. Hebrews 4:15).⁵⁵

The upper inscription of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image

Insular familiarity not only with the broad Christological issues but with this most recent stage of the debate seems relevant to the task of trying to make sense of the problematic upper inscription of the Durham Crucifixion. It is of a different character from the other inscriptions:

*Scito quis et qualis est qui talia cuius titulus cui /
nulla est inuenta passus p(ro) nobis p(ro)p(ter) hoc culpa.*

It has been assumed that it is a garbled copy of an earlier original which may have ended with the words *cuius titulus*, referring to the *titulus* written on the cross-head beneath it, *hic est ihs rex iudeorum*.⁵⁶ The text’s length and position at the head of the page, however, might suggest its importance in the total inscription assembled around the image, and the [314] traditions that have been outlined here provide a context in which some familiar themes may be discerned. For clarity, the elements are presented in the following way:

Scito quis et qualis est $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} (1) \text{ qui talia passus (est) pro nobis propter hoc} \\ (2) \text{ cuius titulus (est) cui nulla est inventa culpa} \end{array} \right.$

The reader is first enjoined: ‘Know who, and what kind, he is’ (i.e. recognise his person and nature). Two statements are then made about his identity: (1) ‘who suffered such things for us, caused by this’ (*propter hoc*, meaning on account of this, our sin), and (2) ‘whose title is, “in whom no sin was found”’. The first statement refers to Christ’s passibility, his vulnerability to suffering, a feature of the

54 Tanner, *Ecumenical councils* 1, pp. 129–30. Bishop Wilfrid of York attended the Rome synod and subscribed to Agatho’s letter. G. Mansi (ed.), *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 55 vols (Florence, Venice, Paris, 1759–1962), xi, pp. 234–86, H.R. Percival (trans.), *The seven ecumenical councils*, NPNF, 14, pp. 328–41.

55 Ibid., pp. 86, 127; Riedinger, *Concilium lateranense*, p. 105.

56 For previous discussion see R.A.B. Mynors, *Durham cathedral manuscripts to the end of the twelfth century* (Oxford, 1939), p. 17; Werckmeister, *Irisch-northumbrische Buchmalerei*, p. 71; Verey, Brown and Coatsworth, *Durham Gospels*, p. 59.

human nature to which his divinity was united.⁵⁷ The second statement underlines his sinlessness, a characteristic of the divine nature, to which his humanity, itself preserved from sin, was joined.⁵⁸ The cryptic upper inscription, consisting of one sentence with two relative clauses, thus proclaims Christ is one person with two natures. It points to a profound paradox: in the union of the two natures in the one divine person, the divine being suffers and the human nature assumed by him is sinless. The two clauses seem intermixed in a way which perplexes the reader and, in doing so, they point to a theological mystery beyond human understanding. On further reflection, it can be seen that the two clauses are distinct though united, just as, in the Incarnation, the divine and human natures are distinct though united in the one Mediator between God and man. The puzzle of the syntax is a literary reflection of the divine mystery of the hypostatic union, to which it alludes through the formulaic language of faith.⁵⁹

The pictorial image it accompanies goes beyond words. The immediate, overwhelming impression is of a great icon of the body of Christ. His gaze alone draws the reader to ‘look on him whom they pierced’. Gradually, the reader takes in the eloquent visual rhetoric of spear and sponge, the *orans* gesture and priestly robe, and begins to make out the inscriptions. The opening words of the upper inscription are clear on a first reading: ‘Know who, and what kind, he is’. Perhaps faltering at first in puzzling out the rest of the upper inscription, the reader may start in earnest with the sweeping enlarged initial of *Auctorem* in the top right-hand corner, ‘Casting down the author of death, renewing our life if we suffer along with him’. The activity of reading and pondering the inscriptions constantly brings the eye back to the crucified Christ. At some point the reader will register the discrepancy between the hieratic visual image and the lateral text’s reference to his suffering. Though the nail-prints in hands and feet are just visible, Christ is portrayed as if enthroned rather than hanging on the Cross. He is shown alive, exalted and adored by cherubim; the Greek letters of the apocalyptic titles of his eternal divinity, *alpha* and *omega*, for those who already know their meaning, triumphantly expound the *titulus* which is inscribed on the crosshead. But concealed within the inscription above the upper frame, is a further expansion of the *titulus* which, like the inscription in the right margin, refers to his suffering as well as to his divine power. The exhortation to suffer with Christ is thus linked with the upper inscription’s words, *passus est pro nobis*, which allude to 1 Peter 2:21–22,

57 This recalls, *Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum ut sequamini vestigia eius: qui peccatum non fecit* [. . .] (1 Peter 2:21–22, quoting Isaiah 53:9).

58 Christ’s sinlessness was supported by reference to various texts, often, as noted, by *tentatum autem per omnia pro similitudine absque peccato* (Hebrews 4:14–15) and 1 Peter 2:21–22. The inscription may here allude to *et omnis culpa et suspicio non inveniretur in eo* (Daniel 6:4). Other examples: *et scitis quia ille apparuit ut peccata nostra tolleret: et peccatum in eo non est* (1 John 3:5); *eum, qui non noverat peccatum, pro nobis peccatum fecit, ut nos efficeremur iustitia Dei in ipso* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

59 I am grateful to Terence O’Reilly for helpful discussion of this inscription and its syntax.

and might call to mind the rest [315] of that well-known text, ‘Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps. Who did no sin’.⁶⁰

The inscriptions, whatever their origin, have not been arbitrarily applied; rather, they seem to justify the use of the rhetorical term *ekphrasis*. As several scholars have recently noted, ekphrastic descriptions in classical literature and compositional exercises were characterised by their *enargeia* in bringing events before the eyes and amplifying or intensifying the subject.⁶¹ When describing works of visual art, therefore, an ekphrastic passage does not just describe what is depicted but brings the larger context or significance of the subject depicted before the inner eye, engaging the attention of the viewer and eliciting a response, sometimes by presenting a puzzle, wordplay or paradox, and especially by calling to mind other images, texts and ideas already in the viewer’s memory. Described in such a way, a picture may ‘speak’ to the informed reader, evoking an expanded range of allusion. Byzantine and Roman artists adapted this literary technique, closely akin to *lectio divina*, so that the brief inscriptions or *tituli* which accompany some religious images and icons function as rather more than captions simply denoting the subject or donor, and the practice became a feature of Insular and later Anglo-Saxon art.⁶²

The upper inscription of the Durham Gospels image is puzzling, even gnomic. None of the marginal texts provides a narrative of the Crucifixion, a literal description of the picture they accompany, or an unambiguous lesson in doctrine. They do not make a polemical statement out of a deeply devotional image. But if the reader follows Leo the Great’s advice, and looks on the image of the crucified Christ having understood the teaching of the scriptures on the Incarnation and grasped the basic tenets of the Creed pronounced by baptismal candidates the world over, then the inscriptions can prompt meditation leading to a deeper understanding of who and what Christ is.

Returning to the picture from deciphering the upper inscription, the reader sees anew, in a single timeless image, the incarnate body of Christ, which veils his invisible divinity, and the glorified body of Christ, that is, his humanity exalted through his Incarnation and Passion and sharing in the glory of his divinity. The depiction of Christ’s wounded side shows the source of baptism and the eucharist,

⁶⁰ See notes 40, 57, 58.

⁶¹ R. Webb, ‘Ekphrasis ancient and modern: invention of a genre’, *Word and Image*, 15 (1999), pp. 7–18; L. James and R. Webb, “‘To understand ultimate things and enter secret places’: ekphrasis and art in Byzantium”, *Art History*, 14 (1991), pp. 1–17; M. Carruthers, *The craft of thought: meditation, rhetoric, and the making of images, 400–1200* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 130–33, 150–154, 168–70.

⁶² E.C. Teviotdale, ‘Latin verse inscriptions in Anglo-Saxon art’, *Gesta*, 35 (1996), 99–110; J. O’Reilly, ‘The art of authority’ in T. Charles-Edwards (ed), *After Rome* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 141–48; É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 60, figs. 1–4, for the *tituli* of the Ruthwell Cross. The ekphrastic inscription framing the Durham Gospels Crucifixion is more extensive than those of surviving early Byzantine or Roman icons. For a ninth-century Byzantine example, see K. Corrikan, ‘Text and image of an icon of the Crucifixion at Mount Sinai’, R. Ousterhout and L. Brubaker (eds), *The sacred image east and west* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 45–62.

by which the faithful are sacramentally incorporated into his body; the lateral and lower inscriptions urge the faithful actively to participate in their redemption, to imitate Christ’s Passion through sharing in his suffering, in order to be restored to life and reign with him. The key to how this may be done lies within the definition of Christ’s identity in the upper inscription, namely, his sinlessness.

The upper inscription says what the image alone cannot. The compressed definition it offers, of who and what Christ is, obliquely expounds the relationship between *sacramentum* and *exemplum*: Christ provides both the example of humble human submission to the divine will and the divine means by which sinful humanity was transformed and thus made capable of following that example. [316]

THE IMAGE OF ORTHODOXY, THE *MYSTERIUM CHRISTI* AND INSULAR GOSPEL BOOKS

Eusebius describes an early Christian apologist who demonstrated his orthodoxy by defending the integrity of the Gospel, ‘to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken away, by anyone who has determined to live by the Gospel itself’.¹ The rhetorical formula did not refer to an archetypal text. Its meaning was repeatedly expressed through reference to Christ’s final instructions to the disciples to teach all peoples ‘to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you’ (Matthew 28:19–20). In this usage ‘the Gospel’ represented the faith Christ had taught, as it had been understood and handed on by the apostles and their successors, without addition or diminution.

The four gospel books which, out of many, came to be recognised in the Church as the divinely inspired but differing constituents of the written Gospel, were known to have been composed by various human authors in the context of apostolic traditions; their Latin translations existed in variant texts and in manuscripts often marred by scribal error. There were also other kinds of Christian testimony which were regarded as divinely inspired, such as the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline epistles. Moreover, the Gospel presents Christ as the fulfilment of divine revelation in the Hebrew Scriptures (Matthew 5:17–18; Luke 24:44–46). The Gospel could not, therefore, be read in isolation.

The need to read the Gospel in the context of the whole of Scripture, to understand the literal letter of its often obscure or apparently contradictory component texts and yet penetrate beneath the literal sense in order to discern the underlying spiritual meaning of the [651] *mysterium Christi*, generated an immense body of commentary on both the Old Testament and the New.² Biblical exegesis in the form of patristic texts, summaries, *florilegia* and liturgy accompanied the transmission of Christianity to Britain and Ireland and remained fundamental to theology in

1 Eusebius, *History of the Church*, V.16, PG XX, col. 465, trans. G.A. Williamson, Harmondsworth, 1965, p. 217; cf. the Old Testament admonition concerning observance of the Mosaic law ‘Behold, the word which I commanded you, you shall neither add to it, nor diminish it’ (Deuteronomy 4:2).

2 The New Testament term *mysterium Christi* refers allusively to the revelation of divine wisdom in Christ and the means of participating in the process of redemption; see, for example, Ephesians 3:3–4; Colossians 1:26–27; 2:2–3; also 1 Corinthians 1:18, 24; 2:6–7; Romans 16:25–26.

the West in the pre-scholastic period. Developments in understanding and articulating the Gospel revelation of Christ and the nature of human redemption were shown to be in accord with the tradition of the universal Church from the earliest times. Members of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, for example, presented both their own Trinitarian confession of faith and the role of Leo the Great's *Tome* in expounding the two natures of Christ in one person as part of the golden chain handed down by Christ through his disciples when he said, 'Go, teach all peoples [...] to observe all that I have commanded you' (Matthew 28:19, 20).³

A celebrated copy of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, produced for the Emperor Basil I, depicts Theodosius the Great and the first Council of Constantinople, 381, which had denounced heresy and affirmed 'the gospel faith' and creed of the first of the universal councils at Nicaea. The illumination shows a magnificently enthroned open Gospel book presiding over the assembly at Constantinople.⁴ The tableau dramatically visualises for contemporary purposes an ancient and continuing practice. In the ecumenical councils which defended and defined Trinitarian and Christological belief, it had become customary to conduct debate before an enthroned Gospel book: it signified Christ's presence at the deliberations and the measure of right belief expressed in his word, handed on by the apostles, and safe-guarded through successive generations. The custom of enthroning the Gospel was also emulated in Rome, notably at the Lateran Council of 649, which refuted Monothelitism [652] and affirmed Chalcedon's articulation of belief in the human and divine natures united in Christ at the Incarnation.

In the Insular world the custom was observed at Theodore of Canterbury's council of 'the bishops of the island of Britain' at Hatfield in 679:

Having the most holy Gospels before us [...] we united in declaring the true and orthodox faith as our Lord Jesus Christ delivered it in the flesh to the disciples (cf. Matthew 28:20) [...] and as it was handed down in the creed of the holy fathers and by all the holy and universal councils in general and the whole body of the accredited fathers of the catholic Church.

The Gospel faith received from Christ, to which the bishops subscribed at Hatfield, was comprehensively defined in their formal acknowledgement of the work of the fathers who had defended it against various heresies at Nicaea and the four succeeding ecumenical councils, and also at the Lateran Council of 649: 'We glorify our Lord Jesus Christ as they glorified him, adding and subtracting nothing'.⁵

3 Leo, *Epistulae*, 98, *P.L.* LIV, col. 951, 959.

4 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. gr. 510, fol. 355r. L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in ninth-century Byzantium*, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 210–17, fig. 36; C. Walter, *L'iconographie des conciles dans la tradition byzantine* (Archives de l'orient chrétien, XIII), Paris, 1970, p. 235; J.H. Creehan, *Patristic evidence for the inspiration of councils*, in *Studia Patristica*, IX (1966), pp. 10–215 at p. 210; R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, 1, Liverpool, 2009, p. 200.

5 Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.17–18, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave And R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford, 1969, pp. 385, 387.

Such regional testimonies informed Pope Agatha's documented declaration of western orthodoxy for the third Council of Constantinople in 680–81, which condemned Monotheletism and upheld the Christology expressed at Chalcedon. He stressed his appointed task as defender of that evangelical and apostolic faith, so that 'nothing be diminished from the things canonically defined, and that nothing be changed nor added thereto'.⁶

The conversion of the Irish, and later the Anglo-Saxons, both peoples from beyond the frontier of the Roman imperial world, had long been seen as a particular fulfilment of Christ's command that his disciples should teach and baptise *omnes gentes* (Matthew 28:19–20). The text had been quoted by St Patrick, in the presentation of his own mission to the Irish, *ad ultimum terrae*, as the handing on of the same Gospel truth which Christ had given the disciples, a continuation and completion of their prophesied and divinely appointed mission to take the Gospel to all [653] peoples before the end of the world: 'And as we have seen it written, so have seen it fulfilled: behold, we are the witnesses that the Gospel has been preached to the limit beyond which no-one dwells'.⁷ Muirchú pictured Patrick leaving Tara and following the Lord's command, *docens omnes gentes baptizansque eas in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti* (Matthew 28:19).⁸

Notwithstanding their remote geographical location, Insular recipients of the Gospel came to express their orthodoxy and full membership of the universal Church, adapting the patristic rhetorical traditions they had also received and naming the apostolic origins of their faith. Columbanus had assured Pope Boniface IV in 614 that 'all we Irish, inhabitants of the world's edge, are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who wrote the sacred canon by the Holy Spirit, and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic teaching'.⁹ He argued that 'the living words of the Son of God', seen in the fullness of the gospels, in apostolic teaching, and the exposition of the mysteries of the faith (*sacramenta fidei*) in Scripture by recent orthodox authorities, left no legitimate grounds for discord in the Church. In a credal statement he went on to summarise the essential mystery of the faith, namely the unity of the two natures in Christ's person, as that which binds together the diverse members of his one body on earth.¹⁰

Cummian's letter, *De controversia paschali*, deals with computistics and questions of authority, but much of it provides a documented demonstration of the

6 *P.L.* LXXXVII, col. 1162; *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, ed. R. Riedinger (*Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Series Secunda*, II), Berlin, 1990, p. 149. The council also recapitulated the report of Agatho and the Roman synod: *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils I*, ed. N. Tanner, London, 1990, pp. 126–30.

7 Patrick, *Confessio*, 34; 40: *The Letters of St Patrick*, ed. D. Conneely, Dublin, 1993, p. 41, ll. 27–28; p. 43, ll. 14–18.

8 *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh*, ed. L. Bieler, Dublin, 1979, p. 98.

9 Columbanus, Epistula V.3, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. G.S.M. Walker, Dublin, 1957, p. 39, ll. 24–27. For discussion of the letter see D. Bracken, 'Authority and duty: Columbanus and the primacy of Rome', *Peritia*, 16 (2002), pp. 168–213 at pp. 175–82.

10 Columbanus, ed. cit., p. 50, ll. 20–28; p. 52, ll. 10–13.

unanimity of the fathers and early councils on the spiritual interpretation of Scripture to disclose the true fulfilment of the Old Testament law in the mystery of the redemptive Paschal sacrifice of Christ 'in the one house'. Cummean shows the relationship of this belief to the need for the unity of the one body of the universal Church.¹¹ A century later Bede used some of these same patristic and conciliar [654] models on a grand scale in presenting recent Insular history. His exegetical and homiletic works do not refer directly to the Easter controversy but are alert to the larger Christological issues.¹² They expound what the universal body of Christ means; Christ's identity, the nature of salvation and the implications for the individual and the Church are repeatedly and often creatively treated, within the tradition represented by Chalcedon.¹³

The great Insular liturgical gospel books, which are popularly regarded as the most characteristic expressions of early Insular culture, seem to belong to a different world. Their dominant illumination, and often the only illumination, consists of abstract ornament, used in carpet pages and for the very unclassical decorative distortion of display letters, and the stylised depiction of the cross, the evangelists and their symbols. With important exceptions, the illumination is confined to the beginning of the Gospel book and each of its constituent gospels. The enlarged and embellished opening words of each gospel are faced by a carpet page which is prefaced by a framed image of the appropriate evangelist or symbol or both; each of the four gospels is clearly distinguished from the others by its sequence of illuminated pages yet the four are visually linked, by quadripartite ornament, for example, or by an image of all four evangelist symbols in the quadrants of the cross, either at the beginning of the book as in the Book of Durrow or, as was probably the case in the Lichfield Gospels, as a pictorial preface to each gospel.

Robert Stevenson critically drew attention to 'the protean pervasiveness' of crosses in a multiplicity of forms in mosaics, metalwork, illumination and sculpture in the late Roman and early medieval world. He found the concealed presence of reserved crosses as negatives within a pattern to be largely deliberate rather than merely decorative, at least until the ninth century when 'increasing emphasis on the Crucifixion reduced its significance'. Among many Insular examples of such optical [655] ambiguity he identified the carpet-pages in the Book of Durrow

11 *Cummean's letter 'De controversia paschali'*, ed. M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín, Toronto, 1988, pp. 60–78 at p. 60, ll. 43–48; p. 64, ll. 59–63; p. 72, ll. 101–110. Cummean cites key texts in an ancient debate: Matthew 5:17, 1 Corinthians 5:7, Exodus 12:46, Psalms 67:7.

12 For discussion of Northumbrian contacts with Rome and responses to Christological developments there, see É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood. Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition*, London, 2005, pp. 223–79.

13 J. O'Reilly, *Islands and idols at the ends of the earth: exegesis and conversion in Bede's Historia ecclesiastica*, in *Bède le vénérable, Entre tradition et postérité*, ed. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack, Lille, 2005, pp. 119–45; Id., Introduction to S. Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, Liverpool, 1995, for the image of the body of Christ.

as cross-pages and, without any particular reference to Scripture or patristic exegesis, concluded that patterns of hidden crosses suggest the providential ordering underlying all things and the omnipresence of the Redeemer.¹⁴ Robert Stevick has demonstrated, through precise measurement of numerous examples, that integrated sets of proportional measures underlie the construction of cross-carpet pages and also the frames of images depicting the four evangelists or their symbols in Insular gospel books, from which he has tentatively concluded that such mathematical designs serve as 'a fitting emblem' for the idea of a cosmos wrought by a rational creator.¹⁵ Though such designs powerfully convey a sense of the numinous, and have often been described as enshrining the sacred text, at first sight the repertoire of illumination in most Insular gospel books appears sport on theology.

Patristic traditions concerning the concept of 'the Gospel' and the Gospel book, however, provide a viewing-point from which to see the possible theological significance and coherence of these images of the evangelists, their symbols and the cross. The divided format of the Gospel book was no impediment to belief in the apostolic deposit of the one faith. The patristic response to the many apparent discrepancies between the Gospel's four constituent books was to highlight the very diversity and individual charisms of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and to demonstrate the means by which they present different facets of the same truth, speaking in harmony and springing from a single source, like the four rivers of Paradise. This involved the production of critical tools, such as the Eusebian canon tables which list the concordances between the gospels and the passages unique to each, and Augustine's harmonisation of the gospels in *De consensu evangelistarum*, particularly their accounts of the Passion. It also prompted symbolic demonstrations of the gospels' underlying harmony, particularly through numerology, for the number four had connotations of order and completeness in both biblical and classical thought. [656]

The four tetramorphic living creatures who attend the divine throne amid cosmic portents in Ezekiel's vision of the majesty of God (Ezekiel 1: 4–26) are evoked in St John's apocalyptic vision of Christ enthroned in glory (Revelation 4:6–11). Here the four *animalia* are clearly distinguished from each other in their individual likenesses to a lion, a calf, a man and a flying eagle, but are as one in ceaselessly proclaiming the divine holiness through the threefold *Sanctus* and in endorsing the praise offered by 'every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea' (Revelation 4:6–11; 7:13): Patristic pairings of these four very different creatures with the four evangelists represented a spiritual interpretation of the four different gospel openings in which the particular charism

14 R.B.K. Stevenson, 'Aspects of ambiguity in crosses and interlace', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, XLIV (1981), pp. 1–27 pp. 1, 12–16, fig. 6.

15 R. Stevick 'The harmonic plan of the Harburg Gospels' cross-page', *Artibus et Historiae*, XXIII, (1991), pp. 39–51: p. 49. Id., *The Earliest Irish and English Bookarts. Visual and Poetic Forms before A.D. 1000*, Philadelphia, 1994, pp. 196–210.

and characteristic of each gospel's revelation was epitomised. The symbolic living creatures therefore came to denote not simply the four evangelists but the humanity and divinity, the kingship and priesthood of Christ and the four stages of salvation marked by his Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. In the exposition of these tetrads Gregory the Great's influential homilies on Ezekiel's vision show how the Gospel, spiritually interpreted, reveals the mystery of Christ, 'the one Mediator between God and man' (1 Tm: 2.5), and its meaning for those who would follow him.¹⁶

The patristic interpretation of the four living creatures as figures of the four evangelists had been combined as early as Irenaeus with Pythagorean cosmological concepts of a fourfold ordering of time, space and matter (such as the four seasons, the four cardinal directions, the four elements), reflecting a richly diverse but ordered creation. This cosmological view, closely identified with the harmony of numbers and geometric forms, accorded with the often quoted biblical description of the wisdom of the divine Creator who 'ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight' (Sapientia 11:21).¹⁷ The text was influentially used by Augustine in his commentaries on Genesis and on John's [657] Gospel, whose opening alludes to the account of Creation in Genesis and identifies the incarnate Christ as the Creator-Logos 'by whom all things were made' (John 1:1–3).

The quadriform order of divine creation was itself an eloquent argument explaining why the Word, the maker of all things, had also made the Gospel under four aspects, bound together by one Spirit. The quadriform nature of the Gospel was a sign of its completeness and divine authority: 'It is not possible that the gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are'; they 'admit neither an increase nor diminution of the aforesaid number'.¹⁸ The argument reflects the idea of the infinite perfection of God: 'He is from eternity to eternity. And to him nothing may be added, nor can anything be diminished: *neque adiectum est, neque minuitur*' (Sirach 42:22–24). The four gospels were seen as together comprising the fullness of faith handed down from Christ through the apostles and taken to the four corners or the cardinal points of the earth. The Gospel provided the four-fold pillar and ground of the universal Church.

The same world view had influenced the early and widespread Christian identification of the cross with the structure of the cosmos.¹⁹ The image of the cross

16 Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, I. 8.20–21, ed. M. Adriaen, *CCSL* 142, p. 112, II. 421–24; *Homilies of Gregory the Great on Ezekiel*, trans. T. Gray, Erna, 1990, pp. 86–87.

17 Wisdom 11:21. Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium*, Tr. 1, ed. A. Meyer, *CCSL* 36, p. 1. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 3.4, ed. W.M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1937: see F. Wallis, 'Images of order in the medieval computus', in *Ideas of Order in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Ginsberg, Binghamton, 1990, pp. 45–67. J. McEvoy, 'Biblical and Platonic measure', in *Eriugena*, ed. B. McGinn and W. Otten, Notre Dame and London, 1994, pp. 153–77.

18 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.8.11; 4.20, 10–11, ed. F. Saguardo, Paris, 1952 (*Sources chrétiennes* 34).

19 For example, Maximus of Turin, *Homilia* 50, *De cruce Domini* II, *PL* 57, col. 342. H. Rahner, *Greek myths and Christian mystery*, London, 1963, pp. 46–68; G. Ladner, *God, cosmos, and humankind. The world of early Christian symbolism*, Berkeley, 1995, pp. 99–106.

as the *forma quadrata mundi* provided an important context for imagining the central paradox of the Creator-Logos who renewed creation and restored fallen humanity by taking on human flesh, stretching out his hands on the cross, and reconciling all things in himself.²⁰ The cosmic cross was identified with Christ. The four projections of the cross, visualised as penetrating all creation from its centre and also as converging on the centre from north, south, east and west, were directly related by some patristic commentators to the four dimensions listed by St Paul, the 'breadth and length and height and depth' (Ephesians 3:18); for others the Pauline dimensions were applied to [658] the cross but expounded to reveal the dimensions of divine and human *caritas*.²¹ Exegetes described the cross as spanning heaven and earth and extending from the rising to the setting sun, but also emphasised that its quadriform sign is inscribed on all creation in a great variety of ways, sometimes small and hidden.

Patristic expository works such as Jerome's *Novum opus* and *Plures fuisse* and the Eusebian canon tables were variously included as prefatory materials in some Insular gospel books. There is also considerable evidence of Irish writers' understanding of the precepts and techniques of patristic traditions on the harmony of the Gospel revelation of Christ. Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* 1.27 gives a formal exegesis of passages in Matthew, Mark and Luke to show that their differing testimonies 'speak in harmony' concerning the character of Christ's discourse to his disciples on the Mount of Olives.²² There are extensive commentaries on the fourfold nature of the Gospel in the eighth-century compilation known as the Irish Reference Bible and in other works of Irish origin or probable influence, which present multiple listings of biblical and cosmic tetrads as demonstrations of the divine authority and harmony of the four gospels.²³ Their stenographic presentation of the quaternities, which assumes an informed audience, can make it difficult

20 Other New Testament texts used include John 1:14, 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:15–20; Phil. 2:10. A.C. Esmeier, *Divina Quaternitas: a preliminary study in the method and application of visual exegesis*, Amsterdam, 1978, pp. 97–128, 169–82 on the themes of *crux quadrifaria* and *concordia discordantium* and their medieval graphic representation.

21 G. Ladner, 'St Gregory of Nyssa and St Augustine on the symbolism of the Cross', in *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honour of Albert Mathias Friend*, ed. K. Weitzmann, Princeton, 1955, pp. 88–95; F.G. Clancy, 'The Cross in Augustine's *Tractatus in Iohannem*', *Studia Patristica*, 33 (1997), pp. 55–62; p. 60, n. 32. O.K. Werckmeister, *Irisch-northumbrische Buchmalerei des 8. Jahrhunderts und monastische Spiritualität*, Berlin, 1967, pp. 125–28, relates the transmission of this tradition, seen in the ps-Jerome *Commentarius in Marcum* and Bede's Commentary on Luke, to images in the Book of Kells.

22 Noted by D. Bullough, 'Columba, Adomnán and the achievement of Iona', *Scottish Historical Review*, 43 (1964) p. 122; T. O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places. The perceptions of an Insular monk on the locations of the biblical drama*, London, 2007, pp. 94–103.

23 'Irish Reference Bible', preface to Gospel commentary, in Paris, B.N. lat. 11561, fols. 126v–137v. R. McNally, 'The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition', in *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff*, ed. A. Hiersemann, Stuttgart, 1971, pp. 111–122; J. O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular traditions of the Evangelists: exegesis and iconography', in *Le isole britanniche e Roma in età Romanobarbarica*, ed. A.M. Fuiselli and É. Ó Carragáin, pp. 49–94.

now to grasp the full range of their allusions to the ways in which the mystery of Christ is revealed in the fourfold Gospel and the fourfold cosmos, and how all these quadripartite forms of diversity are reconciled in him. The commentaries show close familiarity with the standard exegesis on the [659] four symbols in the prologue *Plures fuisse* to Jerome's commentary on Matthew and Gregory the Great's homilies on Ezekiel's vision. They are also aware of the variant but concordant pairing of evangelists and their symbols in Augustine's *De consensu evangelistarum*.²⁴

In some of these commentaries the detailed discussion of the Eusebian canon tables, and of other materials which are normally found only as prefaces in some Gospel books, goes well beyond patristic practice.²⁵ There are also examples of the incorporation of additional exegetical materials on the four gospels within some Insular gospel books, most notably Ailerán's well-known verses on the ten canon tables, which appear at the opening of the Augsburg Gospels.²⁶ Verses on the evangelists, their symbols and characteristics, from a prologue attached to the fourth-century *Historia evangelia* of Juvencus, are inscribed in the Cadmug Gospels, the Macdurnan Gospels and within a cross-frame at the end of the MacRegol Gospels.²⁷ Conversely, there are examples of images normally associated with Gospel books which appear in exegetical contexts in continental manuscripts, such as the four full-length inscribed evangelist symbols in a copy of Ps-Jerome's *Expositio quattuor evangeliorum* (St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 124), and the cross-symbols miniature of Insular type in Cracow Cathedral Library MS 140, linking the *Catechesis cracoviensis* with complementary exegesis.²⁸

More specific comment on the revelation of Christ in Insular gospel book illumination is possible for books which expanded the [660] repertoire of the evangelists, their symbols and the cross to incorporate other figural images and motifs. The process of elaboration reached an extraordinary climax in the Book of Kells, which has attracted a large modern literature explicating, among other things, the Christological richness of its full-page figural images, framed passages of the

24 Cf. Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, ed. R. Gryson, CCL 121A, pp. 281–82, ll. 62–79; Id., *In Lucae evangelium expositio, Prologus*, ed. D. Hurst, CCL 120, pp. 7–10.

25 E. Mullins, *The Insular Reception of the Eusebian Canon Tables: Exegesis and Iconography*, unpublished doctoral thesis, University College Cork, 2001, pp. 103–146.

26 N. Netzer, 'The origins of the beast canons reconsidered', in *The Book of Kells*, ed. F. O'Mahony, Dublin, 1994, pp. 322–32.

27 P. McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books from A.D. 400–A.D. 800*, Paris, 1961, cat. 68, 33; Id., 'The Irish pocket Gospel book', in *Sacris Erudiri*, 8 (1956), pp. 249–70 at p. 253; L. Nees, 'The colophon drawing in the Book of Mulling: a supposed Irish monastery plan and the tradition of terminal illustration in early medieval manuscripts', in *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 5 (1983), pp. 67–91 at p. 84, pl. VII for the MacRegol Gospels, fol. 169v.

28 M. Krasnodebska-D'Aughton, *Images of the Divine: Studies in Early Insular Text and Image*, unpublished doctoral thesis, University College Cork, 1998, pp. 166–243; Id., 'The four-symbols page in Cracow Cathedral Library MS 140: an image of unity', *Peritia*, 14 (2000), pp. 323–41.

Gospel, and ornamented text pages.²⁹ Kells was probably always unusual in its sheer scale and inventiveness, but it developed Insular practices of structuring the text which suggest a long tradition of reflection on the Gospel accounts. Patrick McGurk identified passages customarily highlighted with minor initials in Insular gospel books, which 'do not seem to have had merely liturgical significance', and noted that the Book of Kells' framing of texts and introduction of figural images into the Gospel text occur at those passages.³⁰

Much material has been lost but there are significant surviving indications that Kells was not alone in appropriating and creatively expressing biblical and patristic interpretative traditions, offering a variety of kinds of visual response to the Gospel text in which the illumination is situated but also to the wider notion of the *mysterium Christi*, as examples from the Durham Gospels and the St Gall Gospels may suggest.

The Durham Gospels

The Durham Gospels is in a fragmentary condition, lacking prefatory illumination and all but one gospel incipit, though it seems reasonable to assume it once had a set of incipits, evangelist or symbols pages and perhaps cross-carpet pages. It is of fine quality. E.A. Lowe noted that its ornament in some respects almost rivals the Book of Kells; of its origins [661] he commented, 'Written in Northumbria, in a great centre of calligraphy in the direct line of Irish tradition, or else in Ireland itself'.³¹ The shared inheritance of liturgical Gospel books produced within the various regions of early Insular monastic culture, the possibility of diverse influences on any particular manuscript in terms of its script, text exemplars, ornamental repertoire and style, and, not least, our very limited knowledge of particular scriptoria, have made greater precision difficult to establish. The Durham Gospels has been claimed for Lindisfarne, Iona and Rathmelsigi.³² Recently reviewing the

29 F. Henry, *The Book of Kells*, London, 1974; S. Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy: the chi-rho page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio*, 36 (1980), pp. 139–159; G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells. The Insular Gospel-books 650–800*, London, 1987; *The Book of Kells*, facsimile, commentary volume, ed. P. Fox, Lucerne, 1990; *The Book of Kells. Proceedings of a conference at Trinity College Dublin*, Aldershot, 1994, ed. F. O'Mahony; B. Meehan, *The Book of Kells*, London, 1994; C.A. Farr, *The Book of Kells: Its Function and Audience*, London, 1997; H. Pulliam, *Word and Image in the Book of Kells*, Dublin, 2006.

30 P. McGurk, 'Two notes on the Book of Kells and its relation to other Insular Gospel books', *Scriptorium*, 9 (1955), pp. 105–107, at p. 106.

31 *Codices latini antiquiores*, II, Oxford, 1935, 2nd ed. 1972, cat. 149, Durham Cathedral Library, MS A.II.17.

32 Durham Cathedral Library, MS A.II.17, fol. 38a verso. 'The Durham Gospels (Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, 20), ed. C. Verey, T.J. Brown and E. Coatsworth, Copenhagen, 1980; reviewed by D. Ó Cróinín', *Peritia* 1 (1982), pp. 352–62, Id., 'Rathmelsigi, Willibrord, and the earliest Echternach manuscripts', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), pp. 17–49. W. O'Sullivan, 'The Lindisfarne scriptorium: for and against', *Peritia*, 8 (1994), pp. 80–94 at pp. 84–87; C. Verey, 'A Northumbrian text family', in *The Bible as book. The Manuscript Tradition*, ed. J.L. Sharpe and K. Van Kampen, London, 1998, pp. 105–122, which brings the fragmentary 'Cambridge-London Gospels' into the discussion.

debate Michelle Brown has argued that it is a Northumbrian manuscript representing an earlier phase of development than the Lindisfarne Gospels (which she dates c. 710–21) and closer to its Columban roots, and that it may have been produced in Lindisfarne or another house of similar Columban background, such as Melrose.³³

The Durham Gospels combines a Phase II half-uncial script, often compared to that of the Lindisfarne Gospels, with significant Irish features which strongly distinguish it from Lindisfarne. It is made up of quinions, has a block lay-out of text, and the Irish glossary of Hebrew names, and some of its line and page endings are in minuscule. It shares with the Book of Kells some striking decorative features, including numerous ornamented initials throughout. A prominent initial is given to the archaic *vetus latina* division of text at the beginning of the Passion narrative, *Tunc dicit illis Ihs* (Matthew 26:31), one of the divisions characteristic of Irish manuscripts, which in Kells was to be enlarged as a full-page framed text on the verso of a figural image, fols. 114–114v.³⁴ The Durham Gospels too has a framed Gospel text and may have been [662] an illustrated book, with miniatures outside the usual context of the openings of the book and of the four gospels. Its one surviving figural image, the Crucifixion on fol. 38v, is on the verso of the framed text and is accompanied by an extensive marginal inscription which provides a unique insight into how contemporaries may have read the image³⁵ (Plate 1.1).

The representation of the Crucifixion was slow to develop; examples survive from the early fifth century but there are remarkably few anywhere from before the seventh century. What became a characteristic and enduring type in Irish Crucifixion iconography is first extant in Insular art in the Durham Gospels. Its iconography is often compared with the Mediterranean type whose earliest surviving example is the late sixth-century Syriac Rabbula Gospels, and with abbreviated versions in various media, in Rome as well as the eastern Mediterranean, but there are also obvious differences between them, suggesting that the Irish type seen in the Durham Gospels is not a simple derivative.³⁶ In the Rabbula Gospels Christ is shown in a sleeveless robe, with his eyes open, his head inclined and arms stretched out straight along the cross beam. He is flanked by the lance-bearer (labelled 'Longinus') and the sponge-bearer and by the two thieves, with

33 M.P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: Society, Spirituality and the Scribe*, London, 2003, pp. 48–53, 252–64, 401–402.

34 C.A. Farr, *Commas and Columba, power and Patrick: restating the archaic in the Book of Kells*, in *Omnia disce – Medieval Studies in memory of Leonard Boyle O.P.*, ed. A. Duggan, J. Greatrex, B. Bolton, Aldershot, 2005, pp. 129–42 at pp. 136–37.

35 J. O'Reilly, 'Know who and what he is': the context and inscriptions of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image, in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art* (Proceedings of 5th International Conference on Insular art), ed. R. Moss, Dublin, 2007, pp. 301–316.

36 L. Nees, *On the image of Christ crucified in early medieval art*, in *Il Volto Santo in Europa. Culto e immagini del Crocifisso nel Medioevo*, ed. M.C. Ferrari and A. Meyer (Istituto Storico Lucchese), Lucca, 2005, pp. 345–48; discussion of Durham Gospels at pp. 350, 358–59, 369; D. Tumminello, *La crocifissione del portale di S. Sabina e le origini dell' iconologia della crocifissione*, Rome, 2003, Rabbula Gospels Crucifixion, pp. 49–63, tav. 2.

the groups of Mary and John, the soldiers, and mourning women on Golgotha, taken from different moments in the Gospel narratives and harmonised from the various accounts.

In contrast, the Durham Gospels' Crucifixion is stripped of any landscape setting, spatial depth or discursive narrative detail. The entire composition, including the upright figure of Christ in a long-sleeved robe, is transformed into a seemingly symmetrical linear design of abstract shapes. The Cross and the body of Christ span earth and heaven; two human figures below the cross-beam and two angelic beings above it flank the vertical axis. The horizontal beam is unusually [663] low and wide, so that all four terminals of the Cross extend to the frame, as to the four cardinal directions, in a monumental cosmological image.

Christ's elbows are pressed to his side, so that his forearms are extended along the cross-beam. The closest parallel for this rare version of the priestly *orans* gesture occurs on pilgrims' ampullae from the Holy Land which depict the glorified Christ in long-sleeved robe, but without the cross.³⁷ The Durham image shares one particularly important feature with the Mediterranean Crucifixion type seen in the Rabbula Gospels. Christ is shown as simultaneously receiving the sponge of vinegar to his lips and the lance to his side, even though John's Gospel, which alone describes the wounding of Christ's side, specifies he was wounded only *after* he was pronounced dead (John 19:32). The image does not, therefore, record a historical moment in the Crucifixion narrative. In the context of the long-running Christological controversies of the early Church, the visual symmetry of sponge and spear made a considered theological statement. It symbolised the unity in Christ's person of his humanity, in which he experienced thirst, suffering and death, and his divinity, by which he triumphed over death, his wound becoming the source of the life-giving sacraments of baptism and the eucharist.

The visualisation of the Crucifixion was used in the rhetoric of the debate. Leo the Great in his *Tome*, endorsed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, had influentially articulated orthodox belief in the human and divine natures of Christ as inseparably united in one person at the Incarnation. Christ suffered in the weakness of his human nature but, because that nature was united with his divine nature, Leo argued it was possible to say, as in the creed, that the Son of God was crucified.³⁸ The essential paradox was succinctly transmitted by Isidore: 'Only the man endured the cross, but because of the unity of Person, the God is also said to have endured it [. . .] Therefore we speak of the Son of God as crucified (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:8), not in the power of his divinity, but in

37 As noted by O.K. Werckmeister, *Irish-northumbrische Buchmalerei des 8. Jahrhunderts und monastische Spiritualität*, Berlin, 1967, pp. 53–97, at p. 58; A. Grabar, *Ampoules de terre sainte*, Paris, 1958, pl. 22, 24 for Monza collection, 12, 13.

38 *Epistula Papae Leonis ad Flavianum ep. Constantinopolitanum de Eutyche*, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1 (ed. cit. n. 6), pp. 77–82 at p. 80.

the weakness of his humanity'.³⁹ In the *Tome* Leo reproached the heretical [664] Eutyches for failing to understand the basic tenets of the creed, understood by baptismal candidates everywhere. He accused him of being spiritually blind in not recognising our human nature in the Son of God. Leo said that Eutyches should look on the Crucifixion and see there both the reality of the Incarnation in the suffering of Christ and the redemptive nature of the sacrifice: 'Let him see what nature it was that hung, pierced with nails, on the wood of the Cross. With the side of the Crucified laid open by the soldier's spear, let him identify the source from which the blood and water flowed, to bathe the Church of God with font and cup'.⁴⁰

Leo was drawing on patristic tradition, as Cummian did in *De controversia paschali* when expounding Christ's wound as the source of the sacraments and a symbol of the unity of the Church. Citing Cyprian and assembling other biblical testimonia, such as those used in Augustine's commentary on St John's account of the Crucifixion, Cummian likened the emission from the wound in the side of Christ to the creation of Eve from the side of Adam, and so to the Pauline image of the Church, whose members are part of the body of Christ: 'Surely this is, as the Apostle says, a great mystery in Christ and the Church: *mysterium magnum est in Christo, et in ecclesia* (cf. Ephesians 5:32). Thus there is no other fashioned from the side of Christ except the one. There is one mystical place in Jesus Christ's side, from the lance of the soldier, from which flowed water and blood. These are two symbols of the one Church'.⁴¹ In the context of a liturgical Gospel book, the Durham image of the wounded and exalted Christ would particularly have evoked the eucharist as the sacramental re-enactment of the Passion at the altar, which does not simply recall a past event but 'shows forth the Lord's death till he come' (1 Corinthians 11:26).

In the Durham Gospels Crucifixion Christ's humanity is not emotively conveyed by any realistic suggestion of his suffering and death, but is indicated by the very representation of him in incarnate form (rather than through the image of the cross alone), by the sponge, proffered to slake or torment his thirst, and by the mocking *titulus* [665] inscribed on the cross. These three features are counter-balanced by the depiction of his crucified body as glorified, by the spear opening the entry to eternal life for the faithful, and by an inscription which provides a spiritual interpretation of the *titulus* written on the cross.

St John's Gospel specifies that the title, *Jesus Nazarenus rex iudeorum*, was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin (John 19:20; cf. Luke 23:38). Cummian,

39 Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 7.2.44–4, ed. W.M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1911, trans. A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, Cambridge, 2006, p. 157.

40 *Videat quae natura transfixa clavis pependerit in crucis ligno et aperto per militis lanceam latere crucifixi intellegat unde sanguis et aqua fluxerit, ut ecclesia dei et lavacro rigaretur et poculo: Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1, p. 81.

41 *De controversia paschali*, p. 78, ll. 157–60. Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium*, 120.2, ed. A. Meyer, *CCSL* 36, p. 661.

citing Jerome, noted that these three languages were consecrated by Christ in the inscription of his cross. Hiberno-Latin commentators often referred to the triad in an exegesis developed from the fathers, which interpreted the three sacred world languages of the *titulus* to reveal the universal nature of Christ's sovereignty.⁴² The Crucifixion image in the Durham Gospels, however, uses a means better suited to the visual medium of expounding the concealed meaning of the Latin *titulus*, which is shown inscribed above Christ's head in the form, *Hic est ihs rex iudeorum*, as in Matthew 27:37. In Matthew's gospel in the earlier Durham MS A.II.10, fol. 3r, the abbreviated *nomen sacrum*, Christus (xps), was inserted into the actual Gospel text of the *titulus* on the cross in Matthew 27:37 so that it reads: *Hic est ihs xps rex iudeorum*. In the Crucifixion scene in the later Würzburg manuscript of the Epistles of St Paul, fol. 7v, the *titulus* is entirely substituted by the abbreviated sacred names, IHS XPS (though written with a Greek *pi* rather than a *rho*).⁴³ The different device used in the Durham Gospels draws on exegesis of the wounding of Christ's side.

John's Gospel itself interprets the Crucifixion as an exaltation and the opening of Christ's side as a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies.⁴⁴ Patristic exegesis linked John's use of the text, 'They shall look on him whom they pierced' (Zacharias 12:10), with the citation of the same prophecy in John's apocalyptic vision of Christ's Second Coming, when 'every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him' (Revelation 1:7). In the Old Testament the divine Creator and redeemer of Israel declares: [666] 'I am the first and the last (*ego primus et ego novissimus*): and besides me there is no God' (Isaiah 44:6, cf. 41:4, 48:12). This oracular title of God Almighty is amplified in the Apocalypse, 'I am Alpha and Omega, says the Lord God, the beginning and the end, which is, and was, and is to come' (Revelation 1:8). Its repetition in the opening vision, *primus et novissimus, qui fuit mortuus, et vivit* (Revelation 2:81; 1:17–18), was commonly interpreted as applying to Christ. It is also used to reveal the divinity of Christ in the closing vision, *ego sum alpha et omega, initium et finis* (Revelation 21:6), *ego sum alpha et omega, primus et novissimus, principium et finis* (Revelation 22:13). The exposition of *alpha* and *omega*, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and their numerical equivalents, became an arcane means of refuting heresy; it affirmed the con-substantiality of the Father and the Son, to both of whom these titles are applied in Scripture, and showed their unity with the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ Bede commenting on

42 *De controversia paschali*, pp. 56, 58, n. 13; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 9, 1, 3. R. McNally, *The "Tres Linguae Sacrae" in early Irish Bible Exegesis*, in *Theological Studies*, 19 (1958), pp. 395–403.

43 For the visual exposition of the *titulus* in the Book of Kells, fols. 123r–124r, J. O'Reilly, *The Book of Kells, folio 114r: a mystery revealed yet concealed*, in *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, pp. 106–14 at pp. 108–109.

44 John 19:36, citing Exodus 12:46, identifies Christ with the Passover lamb: *os non comminuetis ex eo*.

45 E.A. Matter, *The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis*, in R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn, ed., *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, Cornell, 1992, p. 44.

Revelation 1:8, but using the form *ego sum alpha et omega, initium et finis*, notes that the words were said of the Father, who will come again in the Son. The *alpha* and *omega* stand for the divinity and humanity of Christ; he is the first, because by him all things were made (John 1:3) and he is the last because by him all things are restored (Ephesians 1:10).⁴⁶

In the Durham Gospels the *titulus* above Christ's head is transformed by the addition of the letters *Alpha* and *Omega*, and above them the words *initium/et finis*, which flank the cross-head, forming the full apocalyptic title and proclaiming Christ's eternal divinity and universal majesty. There are numerous Insular examples of the Early Christian convention of depicting the *alpha* and *omega* flanking the glorified Cross or the *chi-rho*. There is a framed example marking the *explicit* of one gospel and the *incipit* of the next in the early seventh-century *vetus latina* Codex Usserianus Primus.⁴⁷ There are also pertinent comparisons in eighth-century Northumbria, such as the inscribed Berchtgyd stone (Hartlepool VI), where the letters *alpha* and *omega* flank the cross above its horizontal beam and the four expanded terminals all meet the frame. The Billingham cross slab shows a cross of similar type with the *alpha* in the surviving upper left quadrant; in addition, there is a Latin inscription [667] in Insular majuscule, as in the Durham image, though set within, rather than outside, the framing margin.⁴⁸ What is remarkable about the *alpha* and *omega* in the Durham Gospels, however, is that they appear in an image of the Crucifixion, so that the apocalyptic title is directly applied to the crucified Christ. The image is not simply an anticipation of the Second Coming at the end of time, but invites the viewer to see the Crucifixion itself, in the context of the resurrection, as an exaltation of Christ's humanity to the glory of his divinity.

In the opening Apocalyptic vision Christ appears, like the Ancient of Days, with hair white as wool and 'clothed with a garment down to the feet' (Revelation 1:13); following patristic interpretation of this garment as a sacerdotal vestment, Bede, like Leo the Great, emphasised Christ's role both as priest and as voluntary victim, freely offered upon the altar of the cross: *Christi sacerdotium ostendit, quo se pro nobis in altari crucis obtulit hostiam patri*.⁴⁹ The Durham Crucifixion recalls Old Testament theophanies. Christ is attended by two angelic beings, their upper wings outstretched to the outer frame and towards each other, like

46 Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, p. 239, ll. 33–37; p. 571, ll. 39–45.

47 Dublin, Trinity College Library, A.4.15 (55), fol. 149; J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, cat. 1, fig. 1.

48 E. Okasha, *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions*, Cambridge, 1971, cat. 48, 9, 53; C.D. Morris, *Two early grave-markers from Billingham*, in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 5 ser II (1974), pp. 49–56, 52–54; R.N. Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptors*, Toronto, 1996, p. 44.

49 Revelation 1:13. Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, p. 245, ll. 42–44. Bede also uses the image when expounding the *titulus* of the cross: *In Lucam*, 6 and *In Marcum*, 4, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, p. 404, line 1643; p. 632, line 1437. G. Caputa, *Il sacerdozio Dei fedeli secondo San Beda*, Vatican, 2002, pp. 252–58.

the two cherubim positioned over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies in the Temple (3 Kings 6: 23–27), who were seen as signifying the harmonious agreement of the Old and the New Testament in their witness concerning the Incarnation. The arcs formed by their inner wings surround Christ's head and upper body like a mandorla. These heavenly beings may also recall the vision of the two seraphim above the divine altar in the temple (Isaiah 6:3) whose ceaseless chant, like that of the four six-winged living creatures around the divine throne in the apocalyptic vision (Revelation 4:8), is echoed in the *Sanctus* of each mass on earth.⁵⁰ [668]

The Crucifixion image appears, somewhat unexpectedly, not in St John's account of the Passion in the Durham Gospels, but on the verso of the ending of St Matthew's Gospel.⁵¹ In the Eusebian canon tables the final section of Matthew's gospel, which is listed as unique to that gospel in Canon Ten, is Matthew 28: 9–20. The passage within it, beginning *Undecim autem discipuli* (Matthew 28:16), is often marked with a minor initial, but the custom of further highlighting this passage, or the last part of it, looks already well established in the earliest surviving illuminated Insular manuscript, Durham A II 10, where *Undecim* is highlighted and the whole of Matthew 28:16–20 is written in a calligraphic and well-spaced minuscule at the bottom of the left-hand column off 3v, clearly distinguishing it from the preceding verses in majuscule script.⁵² (Plate 5.1) The three-fold ornamented frames filling the whole of the adjoining column on the page enclose the gospel explicit of Matthew and incipit of Mark and provide an elaborate setting for the Lord's Prayer. The prayer, delivered by Christ in the context of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:9–13), was expounded by the fathers and monastic teachers as a summary of the Gospel faith and practice; the *pater noster* was handed on to catechumens with the Apostles' Creed and the fourfold Gospel at baptism, and it was prayed at every eucharist.⁵³ Here it is written in Greek, though in Latin characters, the archaism suggesting the authority of the dominical teaching.⁵⁴

50 Bede, *De templo*, 1, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, pp. 178–83, at 181–82, ll. 1388–1400, trans. S. Connolly, *Bede. On the Temple*, Liverpool, 1995, pp. 46–52 at p. 50. Jerome, *Epistula* 18A.4 on the seraphim, *Letters of Jerome*, trans. C.C. Mierow (Ancient Christian Writers 33), London, 1963, pp. 79–96.

51 See the illuminating discussion of the Durham Crucifixion, its context and comparative material by G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells. The Insular Gospel-books 650–800*, London, 1987, pp. 57–97.

52 Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, cat. 5; Lowe, *Codices* II, cat. 147 'written presumably in Northumbria, by a scribe trained in the pure Irish tradition'.

53 É. Ó Carragáin, 'Traditio evangeliorum' and 'sustentatio': the relevance of liturgical ceremonies to the Book of Kells, in *The Book of Kells*, ed. O'Mahony, pp. 398–436, at pp. 400–407.

54 The *pater noster* at the end of the Schaffhausen manuscript of the *Vita Columbae* is written in Greek, 'in letters based on Greek uncial of the seventh century': *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, ed. A.O. and M.O. Anderson, rev. Oxford, 1991, p. 235, n. 264; F. Henry, *Irish Art in the Early*

A number of other Insular gospel books highlight sections of varying length at the end of Matthew's gospel, though in some it is difficult to assess the significance of the feature where other gospel endings are missing or, as in the MacRegol Gospels, the endings of other gospels in [669] the manuscript are also framed.⁵⁵ In the fragmentary Gospels, London, British Library, Cotton MS Otho C.V, the last two verses of Matthew's Gospel on fol. 22 are expanded to fill six lines with decorative extensions to some letter forms, and touches of colour; the framed explicit and incipit of Matthew and Mark in red occupies a lower corner.⁵⁶ In the incomplete Lichfield Gospels there are four surviving pages of framed gospel text, three of them marking the exegetically important text of the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:1–17). The last words of Matthew's gospel (Matthew 28:19–20), occupying just eight lines and closing with the added words, *finit, finit*, are boldly centred on p. 141 within a substantial ornamented frame. At two extremes of size and format the Cadmug Gospels and the Book of Kells also distinguish the end of Matthew's gospel, in ways which will be considered later.

In the Durham Gospels the text of Matthew 28:17–20 occupies a full page and is most prominently highlighted within a translucent pearly frame of golden interlace. (Figure 5.1) There are four short broad projections inwards from the frame's cardinal points and the block of text is shaped to fit the resultant quadripartite space.⁵⁷ The explicit is written below the frame. The rectangular outer edge of the frame exactly matches that of the Crucifixion on the verso, an accord between the outline of text and illumination on two sides of a folio which has been described as unique in Insular art.⁵⁸ The terminals of the cross can be clearly seen from the text side.

The framed passage describes the last of Christ's post-Resurrection appearances in the flesh before the Ascension, his final command to the disciples to go and teach all peoples and baptise in the name of the [670] Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 'teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you', and finally the assurance of his continuing presence with them, 'Behold, I

Christian Period, London, 1965, pl VII. For transcripts see D. Howlett, *Tres linguae sacrae and threefold play in Insular Latin*, in *Peritia*, 16 (2002), pp. 94–115 at pp. 101–102.

55 The final verse of Matthew in the seventh-century Italian Codex Valerianus Gospels, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6224, fol. 81v, is followed by a small cross in the text column and below it the explicit; there is a jewelled cross with pendant *alpha* and *omega* in the centre of the colophon, fol. 202v: J. Hubert, J. Porcher, W.F. Volbach, *L'Europa delle invasioni barbariche*, Milan, 1968, coloured plates 151, 150.

56 This is based on the descriptions in McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books*, p. 24, and J. Backhouse, *Birds, beasts and initials in Lindisfarne's Gospel books*, in *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community*, ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason, and C. Stancliffe, Woodbridge, 1989, p. 171.

57 The space recalls the general lay-out (though not the style) of the frames for the Matthew symbol in the Echternach Gospels, fol. 18v and Matthew portrait in the Trier Gospels, fol. 18v, Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, figs. 102, 113.

58 R. Stevick, 'The Echternach Gospels' Evangelist symbol pages: forms from "the two true measures of geometry"', *Peritia*, 5 (1986), pp. 284–308, at p. 299, n. 32.

am with you to the end of the world'.⁵⁹ The gospels of Mark and Luke and the Acts of the Apostles also describe the universal nature of Christ's teaching commission. Mark is closest to Matthew: *Euntes in mundum universum praedicare evangelium omni creaturae* and also refers to baptism: 'he that believes and is baptized is saved' (Mark 16: 15–16). But the sonorous account at the end of Matthew is the only New Testament text with the Trinitarian baptismal formula; other references to baptism refer to the name of Christ alone.

The fact that baptism was to be 'in the name (singular) of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19) was seen as a particular statement of the unity of the Trinity. The Matthew text was therefore important in the early Christological controversies from Nicaea onwards, where it was used as a proof text in asserting the divinity of Christ as the second Person of Trinity. Individual confessions of Trinitarian belief were followed by reference to the Lord's words to his disciples and the quotation of Matthew 28:19.⁶⁰ Rufinus in his commentary on the Apostles' Creed said that in these words Christ had demonstrated the unity and indivisibility of the Trinity; Jerome similarly interpreted Matthew 28:19 in his standard commentary on Matthew's Gospel, well-known to Insular writers, insisting on the necessity for instruction in the faith as well as baptism.⁶¹

The first of Columbanus's *Instructiones* opens with a statement of belief incorporating such concepts. All who wish to be saved must believe in God, 'the first and last' (*in primum et in novissimum*), who is one in substance, three in character, as all Scripture bears witness. The law teaches that 'the Lord thy God is one' (Deuteronomy 6:4) and in the gospel [671] the Saviour taught that the one God is a Trinity, with the words: 'Go now and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'.⁶² Isidore also quotes these words from Matthew 28:19 when noting that the mystery of baptism is not complete without the naming of the Trinity, 'the threefold number of divine names', as Christ had instructed the apostles.⁶³

In the rite of Baptism described in the Gelasian sacramentary, the Bobbio Missal of c. 700, and the Irish Stowe Missal (c. 800), the blessing of the baptismal water invokes typological images of baptism, including the flow of water from Christ's wounded side. The blessing over the font then quotes the liturgical formula of

59 *Et videntes eum adoraverunt: quidam autem dubitaverunt. Et accedens Iesus locutus est eis, dicens: Data est mihi omnis potestas in caelo et in terra: euntes ergo docete omnes gentes: baptizantes eos in nomine patris et filii, et spiritus sancti: docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis: et ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus, usque ad consummationem saeculi* (Matthew 28: 17–20).

60 Examples in J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius. Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337*, rev. ed. London, 1987, docs. 291, 295 at pp. 344, 353; C.R.B. Shapland, *The Letters of St Athanasius concerning the Holy Spirit*, London, 1951, pp. 160, 176, 185.

61 Rufinus, *Expositio symboli apostolorum*, PL 21, col. 376; Jerome, *Commentariorum in Mattheum*, ed. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, CCSL, 77, pp. 282–283.

62 Columbanus, *Sermo* 61, ed. cit. (n. 9), p. 61, ll. 20–22.

63 Isidore, *Etymologiae*, ed. cit., 9.19.45.

Christ's command to his disciples: 'Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19).⁶⁴

On the verso of the framed text of Matthew 28:17–20 in the Durham Gospels the image of the wounded and exalted Christ pictures the source of the sacraments through which the faithful participate in the mystery of their redemption and are sustained throughout their earthly life. The Crucifixion image offers a visual epitome of the Gospel faith given to the disciples and handed on to all in baptism with the profession of the Apostles' Creed. The inscriptions around the frame of the image further articulate that belief. Their origin, whether compiled for the image or taken from another source, or sources, is not known, but the concepts and certain phrases of the texts which run along the two sides and lower edge are familiar. That on the left, *Surrexit a mortuis* [. . .] *sedet ad dexteram d(ei) patris*, has a credal echo.⁶⁵

The general sense of the texts derives from Pauline teaching on baptism as a sharing of Christ's death in order that, 'as Christ is risen from the dead (*surrexit a mortuis*) by the glory of God the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life' (Romans 6:3–4). The cross was central to Paul's argument that the baptised must actively participate in their salvation. Christ in rising from the dead has overcome sin but, in order [672] to live with him, the faithful need to be crucified with him and die to sin (Romans 6:5–9; Colossians 2:12–15). They are 'to seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God' (Colossians 3:1–10). Such texts were widely cited in liturgical, mystagogical and exegetical contexts and were important in identifying Easter as the time for baptism. The themes were influentially set out with a *catena* of New Testament texts in Augustine's Epistle to Januarius, known to Cummian and Bede alike, emphasising that the term *Pasch* means *transitus*, a passing from death to life which has been consecrated in the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and is sacramentally enacted at baptism, providing a pattern for the whole of this earthly life.⁶⁶

Leo the Great wrote repeatedly on these themes and texts, linking Romans 6:3–5, for example, to the sacrament of baptism which had been ordained by the risen Christ (Leo here cites Matthew 28:19). He used the major Pauline image of the Church as the body of Christ to explain that baptism is performed during the Easter liturgy of the *triduum sacrum* so that Christ's death and his resurrection might therefore operate in the baptised, who are the members of his body, by a mystical symbolism and form: 'what is done in the members coincides with what

64 For example, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS D.II.3, fol. 30: *The Stowe Missal*, ed. G.F. Warner, (Henry Bradshaw Society 32), 2, p. 30.

65 Rufinus, *Expositio symboli apostolorum*, PL 21, cols. 364, 367: *tertia die resurrexit a mortuis* [. . .] *ascendens ad caelos, sed ad dexteram patris*; Rufinus cites a chain of scriptural texts on this image – Matthew 26:64, 1 Peter 3:22. Ephesians 1:19.

66 Augustine, *Epistolae*, Ep. 55.2, CCSL, 31, pp. 235–36, citing Colossians 2:12, 3:1–4; Romans 6:4, 6, 8:10–11; Ephesians 2:6.

was done in the Head himself'.⁶⁷ In a sermon on the Resurrection, Leo said that if we truly believe what we profess in the Creed, then 'in Christ we are crucified, we are dead, we are buried; on the third day too, we are raised. Hence the Apostle says: If you have risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting on Christ's right hand' (Colossians 3: 1–4; 2:12). Leo assured the faithful that they would be sustained in their earthly endeavour by the presence of Christ, who promised, 'Lo, I am with you always, even till the end of the world' (Matthew 28:20).⁶⁸ He presented the cross as *sacramentum et exemplum*, signifying both the mystery of divine redemption, which the faithful enter into at their baptism, and the human example by which they follow Christ.⁶⁹ [673]

The inscriptions around the frame of the two sides and the lower edge of the Crucifixion image in the Durham Gospels assert the role of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection in human salvation and counsel the faithful on how to respond and appropriate their salvation begun in baptism, in order to share in Christ's resurrection:

RIGHT: *Auctorem mortis deiciens vitam nostram restituens si tamen conpatiamur* [He], casting down the author of death, renews our life if we suffer with him

LEFT: *Surrexit a mortuis [. . .] sedet ad dexteram d(ei) patris*
He rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God the Father

BOTTOM: *Ut nos cum resuscitados simul et regnare faciat . . .*
So that when we have been restored to life, we may reign with him.

The belief that 'If we suffer with him [. . .] together we shall reign' is widely expressed in the New Testament but the wording in the inscription is most closely paralleled in Romans 8:17 and 2 Timothy 2:12. The concept refers to the life of all the baptised, but was to be particularly elaborated in monastic contexts, including the work of Cassian, who presents the monastic life of obedience and humility as a daily crucifixion and dying to the world.⁷⁰ Like the Durham lateral inscription, the exhortations of monastic teachers are often cast in the first person plural. The *Regula Benedicti* gives the assurance that, 'faithfully observing his teaching in the

67 Leo, Ep. 16, *PL* 54, col. 698–699: *in quo par similitudinem formamque mysterii ea qua gerunter in membris, his quae in ipso sunt capite gesta, congruerunt . . .*

68 Leo, *Tractatus* 72.3, *De passione Domini*, *CCSL* 138A, pp. 443–44, ll. 57–64: *nos in Christo crucifixi, nos sumus mortui, nos sepulti, nos etiam cum ipso die tertio suscitati. Vnde Apostolus dicit: Si consurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite, ubi Christus est in dextera Dei sedens, quae sursum sunt sapite, non quae super terram.*

69 Leo, *Tractatus* 63.4 and 72.1, *CCSL* 138A, pp. 384–85, ll. 64–73, pp. 441–42, ll. 15–19.

70 Cassian, *Institutes* 4. 34, 35, trans. Boniface Ramsey, *John Cassian: the Institutes*, New Jersey, 2000, pp. 97–98; *Conlationes* 19.8, ed. E. Pichery (*Sources chrétiennes* 64), Paris, 1959, p. 146: *Finis quidem coenobiotae est omnes suas mortificare et crucifigere uoluntates ac secundum euangelicæ perfectionis salutare mandatum nihil de crastino cogitare.*

monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom'.⁷¹

The opening of Columbanus's *Regula monachorum* calls on the monk to obey the Gospel command to take up his cross and follow Christ (Matthew 10:38), mindful of Christ's obedience to the Father to death, 'even the death of the cross' (Philippians 2:8).⁷² The letter to the Gaulish bishops warns of the need to observe the *evangelica mandata*, which means being moulded to the example of the Redeemer. Columbanus reminds them that they have a shared hope in Christ, 'with whom we [674] shall together reign (*conregnabimus*), if indeed we first suffer here with him, that also together with him we may be glorified'.⁷³ Columbanus's Ep. IV, written to his own monks in c. 610, is of particular interest in the present context:

The gospels are full of this matter and of it they are chiefly composed; for this is the truth of the Gospel, that the true disciples of Christ crucified should follow him with the cross. A great example [*exemplum*] has been shown, a great mystery [*sacramentum*] has been declared; the Son of God willingly (for he was offered up because he himself willed it) mounted the cross as a criminal, leaving to us, as it is written, an example that we should follow his footsteps. Blessed then is the man who becomes a sharer in this passion and this shame.

(cf. Isaiah 53:7; 1 Peter 2:21)

Columbanus enjoined his monks, 'Let us be sharers in the Lord's passion; for if we suffer with him, together we shall reign'.⁷⁴ Not only does this exhortation conflate the texts of Romans 8:17 and 2 Timothy 2:12, but the passage makes it clear that his spiritual counsel to his monks is bound up with his particular understanding of Christ's identity, specifically his belief in Christ's divine and human natures and the importance of Christ's will in freely and humbly offering himself. Like Leo the Great, he refers to the crucified Christ as both *exemplum* and *sacramentum*, the human pattern to be imitated and the divine means by which alone this may be realised. In his letter to Boniface IV, 613, Columbanus again vigorously affirmed orthodox belief in the two natures of Christ, who 'is true God eternal without time, and true man without sin in time'.⁷⁵

71 *Rule of St Benedict*, Prologue, ed. T. Fry, Collegeville, 1980, p. 166: *in eius doctrinam usque ad mortem in monasterio perseverantes, passionibus Christi per patientiam participemus, ut et regno eius mereamur esse consortes*.

72 Columbanus, *Regula monachorum* 1, ed. cit., pp. 125, 127.

73 Id., Ep. II.6, p. 16, ll. 33–34.

74 Id., Ep. IV.6, p. 31, ll. 25–31; p. 33, ll. 6–8.

75 Id., Ep. V.13, p. 52, ll. 3–5: *Christus enim salvator noster verus Deus aeternus sine tempore et verus homo absque peccato ex tempore est*. The phrase *absque peccato* echoes Hebrews 4: 15, *tentatum autem per omnia pro similitudine absque peccato*, a text cited at Chalcedon and in subsequent conciliar debates on the identity of Christ. Leo, *Tractatus* 63.4, CCSL 138A, pp. 384–85, lines 64–73, also links *exemplum et sacramentum* directly to 1 Peter 2: 21–24.



Figure 6.1 The Durham Gospels, Crucifixion, detail of upper inscription. Reproduced by kind permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral. MS A.II.17, fol. 38.3v.

The two-line inscription above the upper frame of the Durham Crucifixion has been described as garbled, but it may constitute a statement of the theological belief which makes possible the *imitatio Christi* advocated in the lateral inscriptions. The upper inscription includes the term *titulus* and may be read as presenting a further arcane exposition of the *titulus* on the cross-head below, revealing Christ's true identity more fully. The words *initium/et finis* which flank the *titulus* on the cross and are positioned at the very top of the Crucifixion image, [675] immediately beneath its upper frame, are written in the same script as the text above the frame (Figure 6.1). The text which runs down the right side of the image is visually related to the upper inscription, for the enlarged initial letter and first syllable of its opening, *Auctorem mortis*, are shown in the upright position at the right end of the top line occupied by the upper inscription.

As suggested elsewhere, the problematic wording and syntax of the upper inscription may reflect the language of Christological rhetoric used in the long debate which continued from the time of Leo and Chalcedon, through the crisis of Monotheletism in the seventh century and into the eighth century.⁷⁶ In the *Tome*,

76 J. O'Reilly, 'Know who and what he is': the context and inscriptions of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image. For previous discussion see R.A.B. Mynors, *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts to the End of the Twelfth Century*, Oxford, 1939, p. 17; Werckmeister, *Irisch-northumbrische Buchmalerei* cit., p. 71; *Durham Gospels*, ed. Verey, Brown, Coatsworth, p. 59.

Leo explains how humankind was made in the image of God but fell under the thrall of sin and death. Restoration of the divine image required both divine power and a sinless human sacrifice: 'Overcoming the author of sin and death (*peccati et mortis auctorem*) would be beyond us, had not he whom sin could not defile, nor death hold down, taken up our nature and made it his own'.⁷⁷ Leo explains how, at the Incarnation, Christ assumed humanity, without his divinity being diminished, and that the two natures were maintained, complete and unconfused, but united in a single person:

To pay off the debt of our state, invulnerable nature was united to a nature that could suffer; so that in a way that corresponded to the remedies we needed, 'one and the same Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus' could both on the one hand die and on the other be incapable of death.⁷⁸

In affirming that human redemption is brought about by 'the one Mediator between God and man' (1 Timothy 2:5), Leo was using a text which had already been long used in the defence of orthodoxy. He stated the belief that, because of the unprecedented character of Christ's virginal conception and birth, he assumed human nature as it had been formed in the beginning, without the stain of sin, and so alone was able to offer an acceptable sacrifice for the sake of humankind. At Chalcedon, as at the Lateran Council and the Third Council of Constantinople, it was [676] emphasised that in his humanity Christ 'was like us in all respects except for sin' (Hebrews 4:15).⁷⁹ The theological language for explaining how, at the Incarnation, humanity itself was transformed, was clarified by the 649 Lateran Council in Rome as a defence of Chalcedonian Christology, not as an addition to it.⁸⁰ Condemning Monothelitism, the view that Christ had only one (divine) will, the Lateran Council declared that Christ who is truly God and truly man has both a divine will and a human will but, because in his humanity he was born incorrupt and without sin, his human will was not in conflict with his divine will: he was obedient to the Father, even to the death of the Cross (cf. Philippians 2:8). His divine and human natures were not simply in accord but were united in one person, willing and bringing about human redemption.

The upper inscription of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion reads:

*Scito quis et qualis est qui talia cuius titulus cui /
nulla est inventa passus p(ro) nobis p(ro)p(ter) hoc culpa.*

⁷⁷ *Ecumenical Councils*, 1, ed. cit., p. 77, 11. 21–25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 86, 127.

⁸⁰ M. Hurley, 'Born incorruptibly: the third canon of the Lateran Council AD 649', *Heythrop Journal*, 2 (1961), pp. 216–36.

The text is something of a riddle, requiring the reader's fuller recognition of the mystery of the crucified Christ pictured below. The concealed clues to Christ's identity may be tentatively re-arranged:

Scito quis et qualis est	(1) qui talia passus (est) pro nobis propter hoc
	(2) cuius titulus (est) cui nulla est inventa culpa

'Know who and what kind he is, (1) who suffered such things for us, caused by this (i.e. on account of our sin), (2) whose title is 'in whom no sin was found'.⁸¹ The first statement refers to Christ's [677] vulnerability to suffering, and therefore to the humanity to which his divinity was united; the second refers to his sinlessness, a characteristic of the divine nature to which his humanity, itself preserved from sin, was joined.

The complete inscription does not literally describe the picture it frames; it is a rhetorical device for enlarging and intensifying the experience of engaging with the visual image. Such ekphrastic inscriptions or *tituli* in antique and early medieval art use various means, such as evoking the memory of a related image, phrase or concept, or presenting a puzzle, a paradox or a play on words; sometimes they use metre, different tenses or address the viewer directly to heighten the emotional response to the image.⁸² In the case of the Durham Gospels the piercing gaze of the wounded yet exalted Christ first draws the viewer to 'look on him whom they pierced'; the upper *titulus* requires the viewer to recognise him: 'Know who and what he is'. To the visual clues to his identity seen in the cosmological cross, the spear and sponge, the side wound, the priestly robe, the cherubim and the apocalyptic title, the inscription in all its parts adds a complex affirmation of the unity of the divine and human natures in one person, and makes an arresting statement about the sinless and suffering character of the offering by which Christ overcame the author of death. Further, it makes the connection between the viewer and the redeeming Passion and Resurrection of Christ, urging the viewer to become like him, suffering with him in order to share in his risen life. The viewer returns to the image to see in a new way what makes an abiding impact at first sight, the body of Christ uniting heaven and earth.

The inscribed image of the Crucifixion is a profound statement of Christological belief yet, unlike the Codex Amiatinus produced in Wearmouth-Jarrow before 716, it does not use the close imitation of late antique art and sixth-century Roman

81 The first statement may recall *Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum ut sequamini vestigia eius: qui peccatum non fecit* (1 Peter 2:21–22, quoting Isaiah 53:9; see n.75). Various other texts express the concept of Christ's sinlessness: Daniel 6:4; 1 John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:14–15.

82 R. Webb, 'Ekphrasis ancient and modern: invention of a genre', *Word and Image*, 15 (1999), pp. 7–18; L. James and R. Webb, "'To understand ultimate things and enter secret places": ekphrasis and art in Byzantium', *Art History*, 14 (1991), pp. 1–17.

uncial script as the means of signifying the antiquity and *auctoritas* of the belief expressed. Rather, the stylised linear composition of the Durham miniature and the Insular half uncial script of the *tituli* are set in a codex which preserves ancient Irish traditions of the Gospel book alongside newer features. The evidence of [678] the Durham Gospels is a further corrective to the common polarisation of *Romani* and *Hibernenses*, *Angli* and Irish, Rome and the periphery, which has been questioned on several fronts in recent years.⁸³

There is some broad parallel in the different medium of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*. Writing before his Ionan community finally accepted the Roman Easter, Adomnán proclaimed the longstanding and unchanging universality of the community's faith, not by discussing the dating of Easter but by expounding, with great exegetical skill, the significance of the Resurrection and the true meaning of the term 'sabbath'. This is done through his remarkable extended account of Columba's last days and his passing over from death into eternal life within the symbolic octave of Easter, completed at Pentecost.⁸⁴ He earlier shows that Columba's holiness did not emanate from his own efforts and the austerity of his monastic life alone. Adomnán graphically recounts the grace of the Holy Spirit in revealing to Columba the hidden mysteries of the Scriptures; the particular radiance of his countenance at the celebration of the eucharist reveals the divine image restored in him. He is shown to be conformed to Christ: 'They worshipped Christ in the holy man'.

Adomnán famously gives the Irish names for people, tribes and places, and many details of local topography and Irish dynastic and ecclesiastical history. But he also presents his community's founding father, living 'in this remote island of the Brittanian Ocean', as the heavenly patron of the mission to the *Angli* and places Columba in the company of universally recognised models of holiness so that his name is justly renowned, even as far away as the city of Rome, *quae caput est omnium ciuitatum*.⁸⁵ In effect Adomnán refutes any charges of spiritual marginality against Iona of the sort made by Cumman, by Pope Honorius and pope-elect John IV and by Wilfrid at the synod of Whitby.

The Durham Gospels makes no polemical reference to the dating of Easter. In a distinctively Insular idiom, however, its inscribed icon offers an insight into what is celebrated at every eucharist and particularly at Easter. It reveals the identity of Christ as God and [679] man, without sin, who, by overcoming death and rising again, brought about human redemption. Columban practices in the dating of Easter had left them open to the misunderstanding that they interpreted the law concerning the Passover and the sabbath literally rather than spiritually; they

83 T. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 320–43; C. Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, Jarrow Lecture, 2003.

84 J. O'Reilly, 'Reading the Scriptures in the Life of Columba', in *Studies in the Cult of St Columba*, ed. C. Bourke, Dublin, 1997, pp. 80–106 at pp. 97–103.

85 *Life of Columba*, ed. cit., 1.1, pp. 15–17; 3.23, p. 232.

were even vulnerable to charges concerning the faith. As Dáibhí Ó Cróinín has shown, the celebration of Easter before the equinox, or before the full moon, had come to be symbolically associated in Rome with Pelagianism.⁸⁶ The symbolism was used, though without applying it to the Columban monks, by Ceolfriht of Wearmouth-Jarrow when he condemned those who believe that ‘men can be saved without the grace of Christ coming to them first and [. . .] that they could have attained to perfect righteousness even though the true Light had never conquered the darkness of the world by dying and rising again’.⁸⁷

The letter of pope elect John IV to northern Irish churchmen, c. 640, baldly states that he had heard that Pelagianism was lately revived amongst them. The form of John’s accusation had long been used by the fathers against those who say that a man can live without sinning and can do so by his own will: ‘it is foolish and blasphemous to say that any man is without sin: it is impossible except for that “one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5), who was conceived and brought forth without sin. For all other men were born with original sin and are known to bear the mark of Adam’s transgression, even if they are without actual sin’.⁸⁸

The text of 1 Timothy 2:5, *unus est mediator Dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus*, as has been seen, was used in Leo the Great’s *Tome* as a succinct formula for expressing the union of Christ’s divine and human natures in one person, and Leo had accompanied it with the explanation, later elaborated at the Lateran Council in 649, that through the unique character of Christ’s conception, his humanity was without inherited sin and was therefore the uniquely acceptable sacrifice for human redemption. The text of 1 Timothy 2:5 had earlier been important for Augustine and Jerome in the refutation of Pelagianism, it was repeatedly quoted by [680] Gregory the Great in affirming the Christology of Chalcedon, and was cited by the papacy in condemning Monotheletism in the seventh century.⁸⁹ In the exegetical works of Bede, the text frequently appears as a hallowed statement of traditional belief concerning the identity of Christ and the nature of human redemption, but it is also quoted in the specific context of refuting those

86 D. Ó Cróinín, ‘A seventh-century Irish computus from the circle of Cummiánus’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 82c (1982), pp. 405–30; ‘“New heresy for old”: Pelagianism in Ireland and the papal letter of 640’, *Speculum*, 60 (1985), pp. 505–16.

87 Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.2.1, p. 545.

88 *Ibid.*, 2.19, p. 203.

89 E. Plumer, *Augustine’s commentary on Galatians*, Oxford, 2003, p. 165, n. 102, 110, notes that 1 Timothy 2:5 became a major Christological proof text for Augustine. For its importance in the Christology of Gregory the Great: S. Zimdars-Swartz, *A confluence of imagery: exegesis and Christology according to Gregory the Great*, in *Grégoire le Grand*, ed. J. Fontaine, R. Gillet and S. Pellistrandi, Paris, 1986, pp. 327–35; C. Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in imperfection*, Berkeley, 1988, pp. 150–53.

(Monothelites) who call into question the full humanity and divinity of Christ by denying that he had a human as well as a divine will.⁹⁰

Although Bede could not from his perspective in the 730s approve the Columban dating of Easter, he did not regard Aidan's motivation in using it as lacking in *caritas*, as he had that of the Britons, whose refusal to convert the *Angli* not only disobeyed Christ's command to teach *omnes gentes*, but betrayed an inadequate understanding of the doctrinal reason why that command had been given. Bede's homily for Easter is directly on the Gospel lection Matthew 28: 16–20. It expounds the final resurrection appearance in which that command was given, to show how Christ in assuming humanity was made a little lower than the angels, but by rising from the dead was crowned with glory, not only in his divinity, but in his humanity. He thereby transformed humanity itself Bede describes how 'the Mediator between God and man', wishing that all human beings on earth should know they might have everlasting life with the angels in heaven, had therefore sent teachers throughout the earth to 'teach all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you'.⁹¹

Aidan's mission to the pagan *Angli* had amply demonstrated his understanding of the universal nature of the Church. Bede presented [681] him as a model of the apostolic life who, significantly, omitted 'none of the commands of the evangelists, the apostles and the prophets' in his words and deeds, so far as he was able. But Bede went further by saying that Aidan in his celebration of Easter 'reverenced and preached no other doctrine than we do, namely the redemption of the human race by the passion, resurrection and ascension into heaven of the one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)'.⁹² In this he unequivocally testified to Aidan's doctrinal orthodoxy.

The St Gall Gospels

Richard Bailey has noted that the three iconographic features whose combination is first extant in the Durham Crucifixion image – namely the two heavenly beings above the cross, the two earthly figures below with spear and sponge, and the distinctive cup-shape of the sponge – do not appear in combination elsewhere in pre-Romanesque Northumbria, but are part of a Crucifixion type found in Ireland (including western Scotland and the Isle of Man) in all media. He concluded that the Durham Gospels image reflects the early existence of this type in Ireland

90 Bede, *In Marcum IV*, CCSL 120, pp. 617–18, ll. 881–90. Bede had access to the *acta* of the Lateran Council of 649, which had been brought from Rome and copied at Wearmouth at the time of the Hatfield Council: *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.18, p. 391; D. Ganz, 'Roman manuscripts in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England', in *Roma fra oriente e occidente* (Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, XLIX), pp. 604–47, at pp. 617–25, n.44.

91 Bede, *Homilia evangelii* 2.8, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, pp. 233–38.

92 *Id.*, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.17, p. 267.

which failed to take root in Northumbria.⁹³ The same Irish iconographic type of the Crucifixion, however, could be depicted with considerable changes in context, detail and range of allusion.

In the Crucifixion scene in the St Gall Gospels, for example, there are no accompanying inscriptions, the cross is shown without a *titulus*, and the two winged beings above the cross arms are not cherubim or seraphim but angels holding books.⁹⁴ (Plate 9.11) Christ's head is slightly turned to his right, his feet and lower legs shown in profile. The introduction of narrative detail reduces the temporal ambiguity of the Durham Crucifixion. Whereas the figure on Christ's right in the Durham Gospels is unobtrusively labelled Longinus, in the St Gall Gospels the unnamed spear-holding figure stands on Christ's left looking up at him as he receives a thin stream of blood from Christ's wounded left side [682] into his eyes.⁹⁵ It is an early allusion to the apocryphal story that blood from the wound healed Longinus of blindness.⁹⁶ By this narrative detail the reader is drawn to follow Longinus's gaze. St John's account of the wounding of Christ's side is delivered as by an eye-witness: 'he who saw it has given testimony and his testimony is true [. . .] that you may believe' John 19:34–35). The play on physical sight and spiritual seeing in the Longinus story links John's account and the synoptic Gospels' description of the centurion who watched the Crucifixion and was brought to recognise the identity of the Crucified: 'Truly this was the Son of God' (Mark 15:39; cf. Matthew 27:54).

As in the Durham Gospels, Christ is depicted simultaneously receiving the spear and the sponge. Martin MacNamara has noted that the St Gall Gospels uses an ancient tradition, transmitted in Latin Gospel texts largely through Irish manuscripts, of interpolating John's account of the spearing of Christ's side (John 19:34) into Matthew's text, following the description of how one of those who stood at the cross proffered Christ a sponge of vinegar on a reed (Matthew 27:49) – The interpolation on p. 75 reads, *Alius autem accepta lancea pupungit latus eius et exit aqua et sanguis*: 'Another, however, having taken a lance, pierced his side and water and blood came out'.⁹⁷

There is also evidence, from outside the context of Gospel books, of the devotional and doctrinal importance of the motif of spear and sponge. In the prefatory

93 R. Bailey 'A crucifixion plaque from Cumbria', in *Early Medieval Sculpture in Britain and Ireland*, ed. J. Higgitt (British Archaeology Reports, British Series, 152), 1986, pp. 8–13.

94 St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek Codex 51 p. 266. J. Duft and P. Meyer *The Irish miniatures in the cathedral library of St Gall*, Berne, 1960, pp. 69–71, 87–101.

95 Like the St Gall Gospels and other Irish examples, the Athlone plaque presents the spear-bearer on Christ's left; for the suggestion that this was not an early feature but a ninth-century development, see P. Harbison, 'The bronze Crucifixion plaque said to be from St John's (Rinnagan), near Athlone', *Journal of Irish Archaeology*, 2 (1984), pp. 1–18 at p. 13.

96 M. McNamara, *Bible text and illumination in St Gall Stiftsbibliothek Codex 51, with special reference to Longinus in the Crucifixion scene in Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art*, ed. M. Redknap, N. Edwards, S. Youngs, Oxford, 2001, pp. 191–202.

97 *Ibid.*, pp. 193–94.

Crucifixion image in the eighth-century Würzburg manuscript of the Pauline Epistles, which is well-known for its Irish and Latin glosses, Christ is depicted in a long-sleeved robe, as in the Durham Gospels and Athlone plaque. Longinus and Stephaton are not shown, but their traditional allusion to Christ's divinity and humanity is conveyed by the depiction of the head of the lance and the cup-shaped sponge alone, which are displayed against Christ's body.⁹⁸ Among the [683] symbolic Crucifixion scenes depicted on pilgrims' ampullae from the Holy Land in the collection at Columbanus's foundation of Bobbio, one shows an empty cross flanked by two standing figures holding the raised lance and spear and, above the cross, a medallion portrait of Christ in glory.⁹⁹ In *De locis sanctis* Adomnán gives a vivid account of how the pilgrim Arculf saw the sponge and spear displayed in Jerusalem as relics of the Passion. He explains that the sponge which had been soaked in vinegar and placed on a hyssop by those who crucified the Lord (John 19:29) was conserved in the chalice Christ used at the Last Supper and, according to tradition, when with the apostles after the Resurrection. Arculf venerated the enshrined relic of the sponge and also saw the lance with which the soldier 'pierced the side of the Lord when he was hanging on the cross. This lance is in the porch of the basilica of Constantine, inserted in a wooden cross, and its haft is split in two parts [. . .] All the people of the city flock to it with great veneration'.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, the sponge and spear were evocative objects.

Seen reproduced in isolation, the St Gall Crucifixion may to the modern viewer lack the spiritual intensity and range of theological allusion of the Durham Gospels' inscribed Crucifixion, but it gains in power when viewed with its complementary facing image and in the context of the book's substantial sequence of five other illuminated double openings, which are visually unified and thematically linked. Four of the openings consist of evangelist portraits placed opposite the corresponding Gospel incipits. There are no prefaces, so the book opens with the first gospel and the first illumination. The Christological signs of the lozenge and the *chi* are formed by the conspicuous prophetic gesture of the interwoven fingers and steepled thumbs of St Matthew's winged symbol, who is poised directly over the seated evangelist. The portrait page faces the framed incipit, showing only the words *Liber generationis ihu* (Plates 9.1 and 9.2), followed by the names of Christ's human ancestors over the page.

The Matthean genealogy attracted a large Hiberno-Latin literature. Ailerán of Clonard, for example, expounds the mystical meaning of the Hebrew names through their etymologies and the scriptural texts they suggest, in order to reveal various facets of Christ and the work of [684] redemption; in the *moralia explanatio* he shows how the faithful should imitate the aspects of Christ thus revealed.¹⁰¹

98 Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek Cod. M. p. th. F. 69, fol. 7v; Nees, *On the image of Christ crucified* cit., pp. 360–65, fig. 4.

99 Grabar, *Ampoules de terre sainte* cit., cat. 6, pl. 37–39.

100 Adomnán, *De Locis sanctis* cit., 1. 7, p. 51.

101 *Interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi*, ed. A. Breen, Dublin, 1995.

Commentaries on the genealogy pay particular attention to its opening words, which also form the *incipit* of the first gospel: 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham', and they expound the sacred names *ihu xpi* to reveal the humanity and divinity of Christ. The genealogy, mystically interpreted, is regarded as encapsulating the entire gospel, and this exegetical practice is reflected in Irish Gospel books where the genealogy, Matthew 1:1–17, is often treated as a discreet decorative unit separated from the next verse of Matthew's text. Commentators recapitulate Christ's identity with his people Israel through the long list of human ancestors from Abraham onwards. But at the name of Joseph, there is a radical disjuncture in history. It is stressed that Mary, from whom Christ took his humanity, assumed the lineage of Joseph and was from the same tribe, but the account of her virginal conception and the incarnation of Christ which immediately follows the genealogy reveals his divine descent.¹⁰²

In the St Gall Gospels, the names of Christ's human ancestors are laid out in columns with coloured highlighting and occupy two whole pages (pp. 4–5). The 'book of the genealogy' ends at Matthew 1: 17 with the added word *finis* and is further separated from the next words in the text by a cross-carpet page. This, the only cross-carpet page in the St Gall Gospels, faces the partially framed *chi-rho* announcing Christ's birth at Matthew 1:18 (Plates 9.3 and 9.4), as was probably the arrangement in the Book of Kells.¹⁰³ The uniquely Insular practice of enlarging and ornamenting the abbreviated *nomen sacrum* of his Messianic title, Christ, not at its first appearance in the Gospel, but at Matthew 1: 18, *Christi autem generatio sic erat*, is theologically significant¹⁰⁴ The long commentary on the Matthean genealogy in Munich, Clm 6233, adapts early patristic practice by quoting John 1:14 to identify the Christ of the human genealogy with the Word made flesh. The small cross which in the Book of Durrow occurs [685] over the initial *chi* of Christ's name at Matthew 1:18 and also over the opening page of John's gospel, suggests a similar linking. In the St Gall Gospels, as in the Book of Kells, though on a more modest scale, the letter *chi* spans the whole depth of the page and at the crossing of its diagonals incorporates the signs of the cosmological lozenge and the cross.¹⁰⁵

The facing carpet page has a centred equilateral cross filled with spirals; lozenge, *chi* and cross shapes recur in the surrounding ornament, where competing elements of symmetry and asymmetry are resolved in the eye of the beholder to form a variegated but harmonious fourfold design. The four arms of the cross are visually extended to the cardinal points of the frame by T-shaped panels of golden

102 J. O'Reilly, 'Gospel harmony and the names of Christ in Insular gospel books', in *The Bible as book: the manuscript tradition*, pp. 73–88.

103 Alexander, *Insular manuscripts* cit., cat. 44, figs. 200, 201.

104 S. Lewis 'Sacred calligraphy: the chi-rho page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio*, 36 (1980), pp. 139–159; J. O'Reilly, 'Gospel harmony and the names of Christ', cit., pp. 74–79.

105 Lewis, *Sacred calligraphy* cit., pp. 139–159; J. O'Reilly, 'Gospel harmony and the names of Christ', pp. 73–88.

interlace (as in the four-symbols page before Mark in the Book of Kells or the cross-symbols page in the MacDurnan Gospels). There are four crosses concealed within the interlace, but all are in just one of the four T-shaped panels, that on the left. The four corners of the frame are emphasised with right-angled panels, all in the same colouring and rectilinear ornament but with slight differences of pattern. In the angles of the cross are four framed rectangular panels of equal size, each filled with a different pattern but all composed of zoomorphic ornament, and again with the same colouring. There are certain correspondences between the two pairs of diagonally opposed panels (one diagonal pair filled with birds, the other with quadrupeds) and also asymmetrical links between the lateral pairs, the interlaced quadrupeds and birds in the upper and lower panels on the left, for example, forming strong lozenge and *chi*-shaped patterns respectively.¹⁰⁶

The first six pages with which the manuscript opens introduce the central paradox of Christ's human and divine natures, united at his Incarnation. The text of Matthew 1:18, concentrated in the abbreviated word of his name and announcing his human birth, and the facing carpet page, carry the sign of the cross and cosmological allusions to his divinity. The next illuminated page in the book is the portrait facing the opening of Mark's Gospel, p. 78. (Plate 9.5) Alone among the evangelists in the St Gall Gospels, and unusually among the standing evangelists of the [686] Insular pocket-Gospel tradition the portrait resembles, Mark is bearded, like a prophet; the luxuriant tendrils are arranged in two curved *chi* shapes. His gospel opens with the citation of Old Testament prophecies of John the Baptist, the last of the prophets to prepare the way of the Lord, and this is adduced in the Irish Reference Bible's listing of the four kinds of rule represented by the four evangelists: *Marcus regulam tenens prophetiae. In primis prophetarum ponit testimonium*.¹⁰⁷

The border of the evangelist page is divided into framed rectangles. The rectangle at the centre of each side border encloses a prominent lozenge-shaped panel filled with Celtic spirals and surrounded on its four sides by four small panels which all have the same zoomorphic ornament, but in varied patterns and colour. Like the frame of the complementary portrait of John, the frame of the portrait page before Mark's Gospel presents quadriform diversity within a unified design. The portraits of Matthew, Luke and John in, the St Gall Gospels are each accompanied only by their own particular winged symbol, placed overhead. In an arrangement which has no parallel in Insular manuscript art, Mark alone is shown without his own symbol overhead but with all four evangelist symbols disposed in the four small rectangular panels in the corners of the frame, the eagle and man at the top, the lion and calf at the bottom of the page. The two quadrupeds are shown

106 The interlaced creatures recall the Lichfield Gospels carpet-page, p. 220.

107 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale ms lat. 11561, fol. 134; also, in other texts including *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta*, in Munich, Clm. 6234, fols. 32v–33v: *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* I, ed. R. McNally, pp. 213–19 at p. 215.

as upright frontal figures standing on their hind legs, each with forelegs crossed to form a distinct *chi*.¹⁰⁸

The four symbols have been described as 'grudgingly accommodated' in the corners of Mark's frame in a 'rather economical programme'.¹⁰⁹ The arrangement may perhaps be seen in different terms. A full cross-symbols page normally functions as a visual preface, either at the opening of the Gospel book before the prefatory texts or before each of the four constituent gospels, but there are examples where the four [687] symbols page directly faces the opening of the first gospel, as in the Book of Armagh, fol. 32v; there is no separate symbol for Matthew and each of the remaining gospels has the evangelist symbol appropriate to it, the calf and eagle with the heads of the other symbols depicted on their wings. In the MacDurnan Gospels, fol. 1v, a four-symbols page also faces the *Liber generationis*; the portrait of Matthew is positioned after the genealogy and the other three gospels are prefaced by author portraits. They do not have symbols, except for Mark, fol. 70v, who is flanked by two stylised rampant lions, possibly acting as throne finials; emerging from the upper frame, which differs from that of the other evangelists, is a winged calf. From outside the context of a cross-symbols page, there is the example of the throne in the evangelist portrait facing Matthew's incipit in the Book of Kells, fol. 28v, which is ornamented with the heads of a pair of lions, a calf and an eagle.¹¹⁰

The situation is rather different in the St Gall Gospels where, quite distinct from a cross-symbols page or a design showing one particular gospel to be different from but in harmony with the remaining three, one evangelist is here shown surrounded by all four evangelist symbols. The Mark portrait page preserves the measured order established in the book by the sequence of two pairs of broadly matched evangelists, alternately shown sitting and standing. The individual differences between and within the two pairs, like the controlled play on differences within and between the sets of quadripartite ornament on their frames, effectively suggest the theme of diversity within the unity of the fourfold Gospel. The four framed panels of stylised and ornamented evangelist symbols in the corners of the frame of the Mark portrait may be seen as variants in this scheme, rather than as an arbitrary intrusion.

The question to be asked is whether any particular significance can be attached to the choice of Mark's portrait for the manuscript's unique display of the fourfold nature of the Gospel in figural rather than abstract form? Like Luke and John, Mark is depicted on the verso of the last page of the previous gospel. On p. 77 the account of Christ's final instructions to his disciples is highlighted with a minor initial at *Undecim* (Matthew 28:16), and the final line of text, *omnibus diebus*,

108 The four panels have some resemblance to the four plaques in the cross-symbols design of the Soiscéal Molaise book shrine: P. Mullarkey, 'The figural iconography of the Soiscéal Molaise and Stowe Missal book shrines', in *Making and meaning*, ed. Moss, pp. 50–69 at pp. 50–56.

109 Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period* cit., p. 197.

110 Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts* cit., plates 230, 325, 354, 241.

usque ad consummationem [688] *saeculi*, in small abbreviated minuscule, is written below the last ruled line of the page, though the minuscule feature appears elsewhere in the manuscript. To the examples of the decorative highlighting of this text in Insular gospel books, noted above in the discussion of the Durham Gospels, two more may be added.

In the Book of Kells the closing verses of Matthew are marked with a highlighted initial at *Undecim* at Matthew 28:16 on fol. 128v; they continue to *et accedens Ihs*, where the script changes, ending at the bottom line of the same page in mid-sentence with *data est mihi*. It is possible that an elaborate treatment of the continuation of this sentence and the next, Matthew 28:19–20, may once have been planned, perhaps in a whole page illumination at least as grand as the chiasmic arrangement of the ending of Mark's gospel, fol. 187v. What is in place, however, is the completion of Matthew's ending on a few lines ruled at the top off 129r, with red dots outlining the first word of the command, *Euntes docete omnes gentes* and a final change of script. At the bottom of the page is the incipit, *secundum marcum*. Shining through from the verso of this folio is the cross-symbols page prefacing Mark's gospel. In the different context of an eighth-century Irish pocket Gospel book, the Cadmug Gospels, the diagonal lines which divide the last page of Matthew's text on fol. 18v into four segments are inscribed with verses on the four evangelists and their symbols from the prologue to the *Historia evangelia* of Juvenius; the verses are continued on the facing page, fol. 19, on the verso of which is the standing portrait of Mark, without his symbol.¹¹¹

In the St Gall Gospels it is possible that the exegetical importance of the end of Matthew's gospel text prompted the depiction of all four evangelist symbols overleaf, as an explicit allusion to the revelation of Christ in the fourfold Gospel taken to the four comers of the earth in obedience to Christ's command. Moreover, the unusual iconography has some broad parallel in the exegetical tradition. Like other commentators from the time of Irenaeus, Gregory the Great interpreted the four winged *animalia* in the opening vision of Ezekiel as symbols of the four evangelists, but extended their range of allusion as an image for the contemplation of the mystery of Christ. In an exegesis he repeated in [689] the *Moralia* he observed that, because the evangelists are members of the body of Christ, then Christ may also be signified in the four evangelist symbols, 'For the only-begotten son of God himself truly became man; he dignified to die like an ox at sacrifice for our salvation; he, through the virtue of his fortitude, rose as a lion [. . .] Furthermore, ascending to heaven after his resurrection, he was borne aloft to the heights like an eagle'.¹¹²

Describing the lion of Mark as an image of the resurrection, Gregory cited the tradition that the lion sleeps with its eyes open, 'because, in the same death in which, through his humanity, our Redeemer could sleep, through his immortal

111 McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books* cit., cat 68 for transcription; McGurk, *The Irish pocket Gospel book*, in *Sacris Erudiri*, 8 (1956), pp. 249–70 at p. 253. The verses attribute the eagle to Mark and the lion to John.

112 Gregory, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam* cit., 1, 4.1, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 142, p. 47.

divinity he kept vigil'.¹¹³ This striking image of Christ's two natures is included in some Hiberno-Latin commentaries which use Gregory's work in their discussion of the evangelists.¹¹⁴ In the Book of Kells, fol. 183v, immediately alongside the text of Mark's account of Christ crucified between two thieves, is a small lion unusually pictured in sleeping position yet with his eye wide open.¹¹⁵ Gregory memorably characterised the four symbols' allusion to the whole work of redemption in the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension by describing how Christ 'became a man by being born, an ox in dying, a lion in rising again, and an eagle in ascending to the heavens'.¹¹⁶ Gregory applied the image of the four evangelist symbols to Christ, to the four evangelists and, through a moral and spiritual exposition of the symbols, to all the faithful who try to be like Christ and learn perfection through the four gospels.¹¹⁷ [690]

In the vision of Ezekiel the four *animalia* are tetramorphic: each has the face of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle (Ezekiel 1: 6, 10), unlike their counterparts in the apocalyptic vision of St John where the first creature is like a lion, the second like a calf, the third has the face of a man, and the fourth is like a flying eagle (Revelation 4:7). By iconographic convention they were depicted as four different creatures but there was an understanding, expressed, for example, by Ambrose in the preface to his commentary on the gospel of Luke, that although each of the four symbolic creatures represents the particular characteristic of one of the four gospels, the four aspects of Christ separately represented by the four *animalia* are also present in each of the four gospels, so that 'All are but one, and the Lord is all and in all' (Colossians 3:11; Ephesians 4:6); 'Christ does not vary from one gospel to another, but is truly himself in all'.¹¹⁸

The influence of such traditions appears within the listing of quaternities associated with the four evangelists and their symbols which prefaces the *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum* by the pseudo-Jerome: *Dominus Jesus Christus totum implevit, homo nascendo, vitulus immolando, leo surgendo, aquila ascendendo*.¹¹⁹

113 Ibidem. *Leo etiam apertis oculis dormire perhibetur, quia in ipsa morte in qua ex humanitate Redemptor noster dormire potuit, ex divinitate sua immortalis permanendo vigilavit*. C. Neuman De Vegvar, 'The Echternach lion. A leap of faith', in *The Insular tradition*, ed. C. Karkov, M. Ryan, R.T. Farrell, New York, 1997, pp. 167–88 cites this among other texts in suggesting that Mark's symbol of the lion could allude to Christ.

114 Munich, Clm 6233, fol. 5r; O'Reilly, *Patristic and Insular traditions* cit., pp. 73–75. Earlier fathers, including Rufinus, *Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum*, PL 21, col. 363, had similarly applied the biblical image of the lion of Judah to Christ's death: 'Resting he slept like a lion, and like a lion's whelp. Who shall wake him?' (Genesis 49:9).

115 Henry, *Book of Kells* cit., pl. 56.

116 Also in Gregory, *Moralia in Job*, 31.94, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 143–143B, p. 1615, ll. 44–51.

117 Id., *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetum* cit., 1, 4.1, pp. 47–48.

118 Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, Prologus 8, CSEL 32, Vienna, 1902, trans. Í. Ní Riain, *Commentary of St Ambrose on the Gospel according to St Luke*, Dublin, 2001, pp. 4–5.

119 PL 30.534; similarly the Irish 'Reference Bible', fol. 134: *Ihu xpo qui homo propter incarnationem, leo propter resurrectionem et fortitudinem crucis, vitulus propter oblationem, aquile propter ascensione*.

But the Gregorian theme was also adapted for a commentary on a single gospel, the probably seventh-century *Commentarius in evangelium secundum Marcum*, which was similarly ascribed to Jerome and was influential on Hiberno-Latin commentators. In the preface the characteristics of each of the four symbols, usually related to the corresponding evangelists, are applied to just one evangelist, Mark, *qui fremit, ut leo; qui volat, ut aquila; qui dicit, ut homo; qui immolat, ut sacerdos*. The image of the four symbols is similarly used to describe Christ, of whom Mark speaks: *Christus etenim de quo loquitur, homo nascendo, vitulus moriendo, leo surgendo, aquila est ascendo*.¹²⁰

Ernst Kitzinger saw in the figure of Mark in the St Gall Gospels an icon of numinous power. He did not discuss the evangelist symbols but observed that by framing the evangelist with interlace and interlaced [691] animal ornament, the Insular artist, coming from a more deeply rooted tradition of conveying spiritual force in visual terms, had intensified the potency of iconic images received from Mediterranean lands.¹²¹ For the Insular artist's contemporaries, part of that potency would reside in their own recognition of specifically charged motifs incorporated in the framing ornament. There are several equilateral crosses concealed in the interlace in the top and bottom borders and the large Christological symbol of the lozenge provides the ordering structure for the animal and spiral ornament in both side panels. The four *animalia* in the corners of the design convey their ancient enigmatic allusion to the fourfold Gospel and its revelation of Christ in his humanity and divinity, his kingship and priesthood, and of human redemption wrought through his Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. The standing haloed figure with a Gospel book set within this framework embodies the idea of the evangelist as a Christ-bearing figure.

The image of the Crucifixion, already discussed, is reserved for the very end of the book. In the Durham Gospels the paradox of Christ crucified, risen, ascended and glorified, is presented in a single image inscribed with his apocalyptic title of *alpha et omega, initium et finis*; in the St Gall Gospels the Crucifixion page faces the vision of Christ coming again in glory, p. 267. (Plates 9.11 and 9.12) The upper register contains the half-length figure of Christ set between two panels depicting angels with trumpets. Beneath a horizontal dividing frame are twelve figures, symmetrically arranged. Visually the scene is strongly linked to that of the Crucifixion by their common colouring, complementary outer frames and internal divisions of space, by closely similar figural types and gestures, and by the overall composition. In both scenes small unhaloed figures look up at the large central figure of Christ in a purple robe, flanked by a pair of angels. The visual similarities prompt reflection on what else connects these two scenes. It has been remarked

120 *Expositio evangelii secundum Marcum*, ed. M. Cahill, CCSL, Scriptores Celtigenae 82, pp. 2–3.

121 E. Kitzinger, 'Interlace and icons: form and function in early Insular art', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas. Early medieval art in northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. R.M. Spearman and J. Higgitt, Stroud, 1993, pp. 3–15 at p. 12.

that here 'Christ suffering as man is contrasted with his triumphant return as Lord and Judge'.¹²² But this iconography of the Crucifixion does not stress the suffering and humanity of Christ rather than his divinity and [692] the facing picture has features which may question its classification as an early stage in the evolution of the iconography of the Last Judgement.

The St Gall Gospels more closely approximates to the *parousia*, the appearance of Christ at the end of time, which early exegetes came to think of as the Second Coming. The image is not a literal illustration of any one eschatological text. In Matthew's gospel Christ prophesies the appearance of 'the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds with much power and majesty. And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice: and they shall gather from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them' (Matthew 24:30–31). The *signum filii hominis in caelo* was interpreted as the appearance of the cross at the coming of Christ. The reference to *tunc plangent omnes tribus terrae* evokes the Old Testament prophecy (Zacharias 12:10), which is cited more fully in the opening vision of the Apocalypse. It describes how, at his glorious coming with the angels, Christ will be revealed as *Alpha* and *Omega* but also as the one who was pierced: 'every eye shall see him (*et videbit eum omnis oculus*) and they also that pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him' (Revelation 1:7; Zacharias 12:10). This is the same prophecy used in St John's description of the opening of Christ's side on the cross as the fulfilment of the Scriptures: *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt* (John 19:34, 37).

In the image facing the Crucifixion in the St Gall Gospels Christ does not expose his wounded side. There is no visual allusion to the stark prophecy which was to be important in the iconography of the Last Judgment, that when the Son of man has come with all the angels he shall sit *super sedem maiestatis suae*; all the nations will be gathered together before him and he will separate them, welcoming those on his right to his Father's kingdom, commanding those on his left to depart to everlasting fire (Matthew 25: 31:41).¹²³ Nor does the St Gall picture include the detail of the four winds from Matthew's account of the coming of [693] the Son of man (Matthew 24:31), which are shown by classical personifications at the corners of two early examples of the scene of the Second Coming,

122 Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts* cit., cat. 44, p. 67.

123 The Matthew texts are pictured in the Bamberg Apocalypse, c. 1000 and frequently thereafter: B. Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christliche Kunst des ersten Jahrtausends* (Wiener Byzantinische Studien 3), Vienna, 1966, pl. 45; cf. pp. 118–20, pl. 35 for the ninth-century ivory in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, often cited as Insular work and as probably the earliest representation of the Last Judgement in western art. A.M. Luiselli Fadda, 'The mysterious moment of resurrection in early Anglo-Saxon and Irish iconography', in *Text, Image and Interpretation. Studies in Anglo-Saxon literature and its Insular context in honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, ed. A. Minnis and J. Roberts, Turnhout, 2007, pp. 149–67, fig. 9.

in the probably ninth-century fragmentary Turin Gospels and in the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon Galba Psalter.¹²⁴ These two manuscripts also show Christ holding the standard of the cross, but in both of them he is entirely surrounded by numerous members of the heavenly company, for the *parousia* is 'the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints' (1 Thessalonians 3:13). The risen Christ, 'the first fruits of them that sleep', is accompanied by the resurrection of all who have believed in his coming, every one in his own order: 'the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall rise again incorruptible' (1 Corinthians 15:23, 52); 'the dead who are in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them [. . .] and so shall always be with the Lord' (1 Thessalonians 4:15–16).

The presence of the twelve apostles alone in the St Gall image is therefore unexpected. It cannot be entirely explained by Christ's saying to his followers that, when the Son of man is enthroned in majesty, they too will sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). As the twelve are here depicted not seated but standing, and the division of the blessed and the damned at the Last Judgement is not shown, it raises the question of why the apostles are given such prominence.

The term *apostoli* refers to the inner core of disciples, called and taught by Christ, who were sent *usque ad ultimum terrae* (Acts 1:8) as the chief witnesses of his ministry, passion and resurrection. They gave testimony of the resurrection of Christ 'with great power' (Acts 4:33) and St Paul emphatically proclaimed the centrality of the resurrection they had witnessed to the teaching of the faith (1 Corinthians 15: 1–23). The four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles variously describe how the risen Christ had continued to be with the eleven disciples for a period of forty days after the Resurrection, teaching them and giving them proofs of the reality of his bodily resurrection. He had continued to instruct them in the interpretation of Scripture, specifically by showing how it [694] was written that Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead on the third day. They were to be the witnesses of all these things to all peoples (Luke 24: 45–48). Matthew's account of Christ's final instructions to the disciples was understood in the light of all the other versions to have taken place immediately before the Ascension.¹²⁵ Commenting on Acts 1:3, Bede noted this period of time after the Resurrection also signified that after the Ascension, when Christ would no longer be physically present with his followers, he would by his continuing sacramental presence fulfil his final promise, 'Behold, I am with you always, even to the consummation of the world' (Matthew 28:20).¹²⁶ At the Ascension, the disciples were assured that the

124 Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS O.IV.20, fol. 2a recto, and London, British Library, MS Cotton, Galba A.XVIII, fol. 21r. J. O'Reilly, 'Early medieval text and image: the wounded and exalted Christ', *Peritia*, 6–7 (1987–88), pp. 72–118 at pp. 76–78.

125 Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 16:14–16; Luke 24:33, 44–51; Acts 1:1–11.

126 Bede *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, ed. M.L.W. Laistner, *CCSL* 121, p. 10; Id., *Homiliae* 2.7, p. 228, ll. 105–109.

same Jesus they had seen taken up into heaven 'shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven': *sic veniet quemadmodum vidistis eum euntem in caelum* (Acts 1:11). The *parousia* is the consummation, when that promise is fulfilled.

The Turin Gospels and the Galba Psalter bring into relief what is unusual about the St Gall image. In the Turin bifolium the Ascension and Second Coming are on facing pages.¹²⁷ The Ascension on fol. 1a verso is prominently inscribed with the text of Acts 1:11 across the centre of the page. Above the inscription is a bust-length image of Christ between two small angels, all within a medallion, around which stand four more angels. A *titulus* over Christ's head proclaims his identity, *Ihs Xps filios dmni*; his humanity is raised to share in the glory of his divinity. Gregory the Great and other fathers had emphasised that in taking on human nature and submitting to death Christ was born lower than the angels (cf. Hebrews 27), but in his Resurrection he overcame death and at his Ascension his humanity was exalted above the angels, to receive the glory his divinity had always had.¹²⁸ In the lower register of the Turin Ascension are twelve separate rectangular bust-length portraits of the apostles, including St Paul, who is anachronistically paired with St Peter, as is common in the iconography of the Ascension.¹²⁹ [695] The apostles are arranged in two tiers, four on the top line, flanking the angelic messenger, eight below. There are differences in the colouring of their garments and they are individually identified by name, but are all of similar beardless facial type and frontal pose. They look out, not upwards at Christ, who raises his hand in benediction (cf. Luke 24:50) and holds a book, as he does in the St Gall Gospels scene where, in addition, he holds the cross.

In the Turin Second Coming, fol. 2a recto, some ninety-six small half-length male figures are shown, each in a rectangular frame in horizontal rows within a close-packed regular grid, forming a numerous heavenly host on all sides of the central rectangular panel of Christ, shown standing and holding the cross. Clearly, the Turin scene of the Ascension is closer than its scene of the Second Coming is to the St Gall vision of the *parousia*. In the St Gall Gospels it is the apostles, to whom the Ascension promise of Christ's return was made, who are alone shown at its fulfilment.

The Galba Psalter depicts the Ascension on fol. 120v but also has two illuminations showing Christ enthroned in glory at the end of time and accompanied by throngs of figures who are identified by inscriptions as various categories or choirs of the communion of saints. On fol. 2v Christ is seen enthroned with the instruments of the Passion – the spear, the sponge and the cross – and accompanied by the choirs of angels, prophets and apostles arranged in horizontal registers; the apostles stand with St Peter, St Paul and the Virgin centrally positioned, as if in the

127 Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells* cit., pp. 83–88, figs. 120, 121; M. Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, Dublin, 2008, pl. 4–5.

128 Gregory, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetum* cit., 1.8, 23.

129 K. Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, New York, 1977, Rabbula Gospels, fol. 13v Ascension, p. 101, pl. 36.

iconography of the Ascension (Figure 1.7). On fol. 21r Christ is shown enthroned and holding the cross, with his wounded side displayed. His mandorla is entirely surrounded by the framed choirs of martyrs, confessors and virgins, whom he blesses (Figure 1.2).¹³⁰ The depiction of the Second Coming in the Turin Gospels and the Galba Psalter raises the question of what particular associations might have been suggested by the distinctive representation of the twelve apostles alone in the scene in the St Gall Gospels?

George Henderson has noted that in contrast to Irish literary descriptions of the apostles, representations of the apostles on the Irish high crosses tend not to show individual differences of appearance but depend on their number for identification.¹³¹ In the St Gall Gospels [696] none of the apostles is identified, not even St Peter, and all have exactly the same kind of hair, clean-shaven face, figural type and frontal pose, though there is some diversity in the colouring and folds of their garments. The number of the apostles, prefigured in the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel, is already important in the Gospel accounts of their calling and in the urgency after the Ascension of filling the place left by Judas with one who would join the apostolic mission as a witness to Christ's ministry and resurrection (Acts 1:22). This was followed by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the twelve at Pentecost when they spoke in tongues and were intelligible to people from diverse parts of the Roman world and beyond it (Acts 2:1–14), reversing the divisive confusion of tongues at Babel and expressing the unity of the Church and the universal nature of its mission.¹³²

The account of the early apostolic Church, whose members had 'but one heart and soul' (Acts 4:32), was a frequently cited model of the Christian life and particularly the monastic life.¹³³ Hagiographic descriptions of monastic communities often picture a holy founder with twelve companions. The apostles were also closely identified with the deposit of faith. Two of the four evangelists were apostles and two used the testimony of the two chief apostles. Apostolicity was

130 E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, 900–1066*, London, 1976, cat. 5, pl. 31–33.

131 G. Henderson, 'The representation of the Apostles in Insular art, with special reference to the new Apostles frieze at Tarbat, Ross-shire', in *Text, Image, Interpretation*, ed. Minnis and Roberts, pp. 473–94, pp. 477–80. See D. Ó Cróinín, 'Cummianus Longus and the iconography of the apostles in early Irish literature', in *Sages, Saints and Scholars: Celtic Studies in honour of James Carney*, ed. D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach and K. McCone, Maynooth, 1989, pp. 268–79. N. Netzer, *Cultural Interplay in the Eighth century: The Trier Gospels and the Making of a Scriptorium at Echternach*, Cambridge, 1994, 'Apostles', pp. 62–71. H. Richardson, 'Number and symbol in early Christian art', in *Journal of Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 114 (1984), pp. 28–47 at pp. 30–31, fig. 3a for the names of the apostles on the Ardagh chalice, with twelve studs and panels of ornament.

132 Bede, *Homiliae evangelii* 2.17, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, p. 307; Id., *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et Retractiones*, CCSL 121, pp. 16–17; 126.

133 Acts 4:32 is used several times in Cassian's *Conlationes*, for example, and is fundamental to Augustine's *Praeceptum*. See Augustine, *The Monastic Rules*, ed. B. Ramsay, New York, 2004, p. 110; p. 64, n. 30.

the main criterion for the rest of the New Testament canon and apostolic testimony was seen to underlie baptismal and eucharistic rites.¹³⁴ The apostles were believed to be the authors of the Apostles' Creed, used at baptism in the rite of the *traditio symboli* which, with the symbolic [697] handing on of the fourfold Gospel, represented the transmission of the faith.¹³⁵ Following the fathers, Bede related the norm of the Church's teaching directly to the commandment of Christ to 'teach them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Matthew 28:20) and commented: 'Whoever observes and teaches everything the Lord commanded the apostles, without either adding anything further or omitting any of them, such a one is indeed a pillar in God's house which is the Church and a bulwark of truth' (1 Timothy 3:15).¹³⁶

The apostles are a point of connection between the Church on earth and in heaven; their presence in the St Gall image suggests the unity of the whole Church drawn from the four comers of the earth to which they and their successors had taken the Gospel. Christ set the completion of the universal mission as the pre-condition for the *parousia*: 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations: and then shall the consummation come' (Matthew 24:14).¹³⁷ The twelve apostles here all hold Gospel books depicted like those held, and with exactly the same gesture, by the four evangelists before the gospel openings and by the angels above the head of the Crucified on the facing page.

The completeness and universality represented by the number twelve was a key element in patristic exegesis of the apostles. Augustine repeatedly speaks of the Church as spread over the four quarters of the whole world, east, west, north and south, as is shown by the apostles, whose number is divisible into four parts of three each. This numerology was frequently related to the Trinitarian baptismal formula contained in Christ's instructions for the world-wide mission in Matthew 28:19. Describing the foundational role of the apostles in the Church on earth, Augustine also noted eschatological scriptural references to their sacred number: there are twelve thrones reserved for the apostles judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28) and the names of the apostles are inscribed [698] on the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem, as the names of the twelve tribes are inscribed on its gates (Revelation 21:14). Further, as scripture frequently foretells, the Church is called from the four quarters of the globe and it is called from every side in the name of the Trinity, by baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

134 J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, fifth edn. New York, 1977, pp. 44, 60.

135 Rufinus, *Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum*, PL 21, col 335–80 at col. 337, for the tradition that, after the Ascension, each apostle contributed a clause of the creed so that when scattered in diverse places they would not give divergent teaching. Ambrose, *Explanatio symboli ad iniciandos*, PL 17, col. 1158, states that nothing is to be added to or taken away from the apostolic writings and the creed drawn up and handed on by the apostles.

136 Bede, *De templo*, II, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, p. 200, ll. 318–34.

137 Augustine, Ep. 199.48, *Epistulae* 4, ed. cit., pp. 286–87.

(Matthew 28:19).¹³⁸ Gregory similarly used this approach, and the idea of twelve as a sign of perfection, in expounding the same text in Matthew: *Vnde sancti apostoli, quia Trinitatem in quatuor partibus mundi praedicare mittebantur; duodecim sunt electi, ut etiam numero perfectionem ostenderent quam uita et uoce praedicarent*.¹³⁹

The numerological interpretation of twelve was also very familiar to Insular commentators. The Irish Reference Bible refers to the number of months in the completeness of the year and intones biblical examples of its importance: the number of the apostles is signified in the twelve sons of Jacob, the camps of the twelve tribes sited around the tabernacle, the twelve bronze oxen supporting the laver in the temple, the twelve gates of the heavenly city. The fourfold world and its threefold division (meaning the three continents) are related to the four gospels and the Trinity to which they testify, and to Christ's commission to the disciples at the end of Matthew's gospel, *Euntes ergo nunc docete omnes gentes*. The work then itemises what is symbolically contained in the number twelve, the full complement of the apostolic mission: the four gospel books, the faith in the Trinity, the four parts of the world.¹⁴⁰ Bede's *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, like Arator's influential verse paraphrase of Acts, explains that the number of the apostles was restored to twelve 'so that through two parts of six each (for three times four is twelve) they might preserve by an eternal number the grace which they were preaching by word'. Those who were to preach the faith of the holy Trinity to the four parts of the world, in line with the Lord's saying, 'Go, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit', might thereby show the perfection of the work by the sacramental sign (*sacramentum*) of their number as well.¹⁴¹ [699]

In the St Gall Gospels image the twelve apostles are arranged in four groups. They stand in two ordered rows and in each row three apostles have their heads tilted upwards towards Christ from the left and three from the right. The arrangement is like a visual equivalent of the interest shown by exegetes in demonstrating that twelve is made up of four threes.

The main visual impact is of a unified body set beneath the large half-length figure of Christ. For the community in which the St Gall Gospels was used, the scene may well have conveyed a sense of the Church as the body of Christ, with Christ as its heavenly head.¹⁴² Columbanus had expertly used part of the chain of New

138 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 86.4, ed. D.E. Dekkers And J. Fraipont, *CCSL* 38–40, pp. 1201–1202.

139 Gregory, *Moralia*, 1, 14, 19, *CCSL* 143, p. 34, ll. 22–25.

140 Paris, B.N. ms lat. 11561, fols. 132, 183v–188.

141 Bede, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, ed. cit., pp. 11–12.

142 Romans 12: 4–5; Ephesians 2:14–22, 4: 1–16; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, 12:4–31; Colossians 1:18–22, 2:9–20, 3:14–15. For the image of the head and body in Tyconius's handbook on biblical interpretation, *Liber regularum*, its use by Augustine, Bede and Irish commentators, and for discussion of its relevance to the interpretation of the image on fol. 202v in the Book of Kells, see C.A. Farr, *The Book of Kells*, pp. 66–75, 91–92.

Testament texts on this image in urging the need to maintain the Gospel and follow the commands of Christ, the head of all (Ephesians 1:22), 'like single harmonious members of one body'. He exhorted the joint members of the body to hasten in their spiritual growth, to become like Christ: *in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Iesu Christi* (Ephesians 4:13).¹⁴³ He also used texts from this chain in stating that belief in the oneness and unity of Christ required the spiritual growth and unity of the members of his body: 'For we, in respect of the unity of the person, *in whom it pleased the fulness of deity to reside bodily* (Colossians 2:9), believe one Christ, his divinity and humanity, since *he who descended is himself he who ascended above every heaven that he might fill all things* (Ephesians 4:10)'.¹⁴⁴

Gregory the Great used the same metaphor and texts in his layered exposition of Ezekiel's vision to reveal Christ, who through his incarnate body achieved immortality for humanity and in his ecclesial body brings them to perfection. The members of his Church, like the chest, arms and hands of the body, are to grow together and become bound to him so that 'the entire body is perfected, like the holy apostles, because they stood near to our Saviour, as the chest cleaved to the head'. Likewise, all the various other members of the Church, as members of the body, are to grow through spiritual nourishment and good works [700] (cf. Colossians 2:19) 'until we all meet [...] unto a perfect man, into the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:11, 13).¹⁴⁵

The final double opening in the St Gall Gospels juxtaposes Christ's earthward descent, in the image of his incarnate body on the cross, and his heavenly ascent, in a scene where the arrangement of the apostles suggests the Ascension and the promise that Christ will come again in like manner, but the trumpeting angels and the cross held by Christ signal the fulfilment of that promise at his coming again in glory. The apostles gaze at the vision of the risen, ascended and glorified Christ with their faces upturned at the same acute angle as the faces of the spear-bearer and the sponge-holder who look up at the crucified Christ in the adjoining scene. The viewer is drawn by the line of blood from Christ's wound to follow the gaze of Longinus and recognise the divinity as well as the humanity of Christ. On the facing page, the outward glance of one of the apostles, at the centre of the upper row, invites the viewer to join in contemplating Christ in his risen body as well the glory of his divinity. The two images do not simply refer to a past and a future event but make both present in the mind of the viewer. Together they show the hope of eternal life offered by Christ in overcoming death on the cross and a vision of its final realisation for all who follow the Gospel faith and practice handed on by the apostles.

Visually and thematically the two images form a diptych which is the culmination of a coherent sequence of illuminations in the St Gall Gospels. The decoration

143 Columbanus, Ep. 11.8, p. 20, ll. 30–33; p. 22, ll. 16–20.

144 Columbanus, Ep. V.13, p. 52, ll. 10–13; also p. 50, ll. 24–27, citing Ephesians 2:14.

145 *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetum*, 1.6, 8.

and layout of the opening pages strongly mark the first coming of Christ, foreshadowed in his Old Testament ancestors listed by Matthew. The fourfold world of the divine Creator and the exaltation of the cross are intimated in the lavish embellishment of the text of the Incarnation (Matthew 1:18) and the facing carpet page. The four aspects of Christ's identity and the mystery of redemption through his Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension, revealed in the fourfold Gospel, are represented by the figures of the evangelists and their symbols at the Gospel incipits. These double openings are unified by the patterns of unity and diversity in the quadripartite ornament and its inclusion of the Christological signs of the cross, the *chi* and the lozenge. Immediately following Christ's instructions to his disciples to teach and baptise all peoples at the end of Matthew's gospel, the [701] depiction of all four evangelist symbols overleaf suggests the fourfold gospel taken by the apostles to the four corners of the earth. The sixth and final double opening, linking the Crucifixion and the vision of the Second Coming, presents a pictorial summation of the Gospel revelation of Christ, his conquest of death and the promise of sharing in his risen life.

Though the iconography of the crucified Christ in the St Gall Gospels is the same basic type as that in the Durham Gospels, the additional features of each, and their differing contexts within the two Gospel books, significantly distinguish their emphasis and range of allusion. They may be seen, not as translations of any specific patristic or liturgical texts, but as creative visual responses to a shared inheritance of ancient interpretative traditions about the Gospel faith and the *mysterium Christi*, on which Insular Latin writers also drew.¹⁴⁶ [702]

Discussione sulla lezione O'Reilly

TILGHMAN: I was particularly interested in your explanation of the four symbols surrounding Mark in the St Gall Gospels. How might this relate to the end of Matthew and the four symbols page before Mark in the Book of Kells, which appears to emphasise the symbol of Matthew in its layout?

O'REILLY: *This is an intriguing page and thank you for drawing attention to it. In the St Gall Gospels the image of St Mark on the reverse of the last page of Matthew's gospel is alone among the manuscript's four individual portraits of the evangelists to include all four symbols. In the Book of Kells, in contrast, four-symbols pages preface the gospels of Matthew, Mark and John; Luke too probably had such a preface. However, the four-symbols page before Mark on fol. 129v in Kells, unlike that before John, does have the last words of the previous gospel inscribed directly on the recto of the folio. The last faint lines of Matthew now seen at the top of 129r, and the incipit of*

146 The photographs of Durham Cathedral Library, MS A.II.17, fols. 38r, 38v and MS A.II.10, fol. 3v and St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, pp. 78, 266, 267, were supplied, with kind permission to reproduce them, by Durham Cathedral Library and the Stiftsbibliothek, St Gallen.

Mark below, do not correspond with the text block on the facing page but are fitted within the outline of the panels of the four-symbols design which shows through from fol. 129v, suggesting that the lines were written after the image. While this unusual arrangement may well have the effect of highlighting the familiar exegetical link between Christ's words at the end of Matthew and the theme of the fourfold Gospel, I do not think that the Matthew text provides the key to the very particular way in which the four symbols are displayed on fol. 129v even though, as you rightly say, their layout appears to emphasise the symbol of Matthew.

The page may perhaps be best understood in the context of the greatly expanded role of the four evangelist symbols in the Book of Kells. In addition to the four-symbols pages before the individual gospels, the four symbols are shown in the glossary of Hebrew names and in the canon tables; one, two or three symbols also appear at other points in the book. The illumination emphasises not simply the harmony of the four gospels but the multiple forms of that harmony and also the diversity of the fourfold Gospel, evident in the markedly distinct [703] quadripartite designs of the three surviving four-symbols pages and in the book's spectacular opening sequence of canon tables, where the evangelist symbols are shown in varying relationships with each other and sometimes in composite form. Luke's symbol combines a calf's head with the legs of an eagle or a lion (fols. 1v, 2v, 3v, 4r), Mark's lion has the hind legs and tail of a calf (fol. 3v) and the calf and lion are shown together, each with two legs and bird-like bodies (fol. 5r). Only the symbol of Matthew is not shown in any such hybrid form.

In the four-symbols page prefacing Mark's gospel, each of the four symbols is displayed within a golden roundel set in one of the four rectangular panels around the cross. In three of the panels the symbol is accompanied by a pair of smaller symbols, depicted above or below the roundel. Mark's symbol is accompanied by the calf and eagle, Luke's by the eagle and calf, John's by the lion and calf. Matthew's symbol, however, is accompanied only by another depiction of Matthew's symbol, enlarged to fill the available space above the roundel; both of them are frontal figures. The evangelist symbols in the other three roundels are in profile, facing inwards, and their subsidiary pairs of symbols are shown adorsed. The closest comparisons for their depiction are among the symbols in the canon tables and the canons might help explain not only the singular treatment of Matthew in the Marcan four-symbols page, but the equally puzzling combinations of the subsidiary paired symbols in the panels of Mark, Luke and John.

Eusebius's canon tables differ from Ammonius's arrangement of four columns setting out the continuous text of Matthew with just the parallel sections from the other gospels. The Eusebian canons mostly begin with Matthew but, preserving the order and the distinctiveness of the other three gospels, they symbolically demonstrate the harmony of the whole fourfold Gospel on a large scale, within the numerologically important framework of ten tables.

They do not therefore literally include every possible comparison, as Carl Nordenfalk noted: the relatively few parallels between Mark–Luke–John and Mark–John are omitted. The passages common to all four gospels are tabulated in Canon I, the passages unique to each are consecutively listed in Canon X. The first and the last of the ten Eusebian canons thus symbolically encompass the harmony and the diversity of the four gospels. Matthew opens both of these canons and also begins six more of the tables which detail particular parallels: Canons II–IV, comparing passages or themes shared by groups of three gospels (Matthew–Mark–Luke; Matthew–Luke–John; Matthew–Mark–John), and Canons V–VII, comparing what is shared by various pairs of gospels (Matthew–Luke; Matthew–Mark; Matthew–John). Matthew therefore opens all the Eusebian canon tables except Canons VIII and IX, which compare Mark–Luke and Luke–John. On the four-symbols page in [704] Kells, fol. 129v, these particular combinations are figured in the paired symbols which accompany the roundel symbols of Mark, Luke and John (the calf–eagle, eagle–calf, and lion–calf respectively). They may suggest the harmonies existing between these three gospels in addition to all those they share with Matthew, either singly, in twos or all three together. [705]

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Between two worlds

Nine of the ten Eusebian canon tables list passages common to all four gospels or to various combinations of three or two of them. The last of the canon tables lists the passages unique to each gospel in turn, ending with St John's gospel. Of the many sections of text that distinguish the fourth gospel from the three synoptic gospels, patristic and early medieval writers most often cited from the theological epitome contained in its Prologue (John 1:1–18), Augustine over a thousand times.¹ It might be expected that the Prologue would begin the list of passages peculiar to John in Canon X, but this is not the case. Instead, it is mostly found in Canon III, which compares what Matthew, Luke, and John have in common. In the first of these parallel entries, laid out with customary clarity in the Lindisfarne Gospels, fol. 12, the verses of John's mystical Prologue describing the pre-existent divine Logos or Word are compared with the accounts of the human genealogy of Christ in Matthew and Luke.² The Eusebian canons here give unusual expression to the theological rather than literal concordance existing between texts, but the spiritual harmony of these passages was well established in patristic exegesis.³

John's Prologue was often rhetorically paired with Matthew's version of the genealogy in particular, partly because of their opening position in each gospel and also because Matthew and John, the first and last of the evangelists to write, were both apostles, directly taught by Christ. Matthew's listing of the Old Testament human ancestors of Christ, *Liber generationis Iesu Christi filii David filii Abraham* (Matthew 1:1–17), forms a preface to his account of the birth of Christ in time: *Christi autem generatio sic erat* (Matthew 1:18). John's Prologue, announcing that in the beginning was the uncreated divine Word, through whom

1 H. Marrou, *St Augustine and his Influence Through the Ages* (New York, 1957), 83.

2 C. Nordenfalk, "Canon Tables on Papyrus", *DOP* 36 (1982), 29–39: 37, n. 42. The first three entries of Canon III compare Matthew I (Matthew 1: 1–16) and Luke XIV (Luke 3:23–38) with John I, III and IV (John 1: 1–5, 9–10, 14). M.P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: Society, Spirituality and the Scribe* (London, 2003), pl. 7.

3 Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 3.24, Migne PG 20, 267. E. Mullins, "The Insular Reception of the Eusebian Canon Tables: Exegesis and Iconography" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College Cork, 2001), 19–22.

all things were made, reaches its climax with the revelation, *Et verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The two gospel openings disclose the identity of Christ as the Word incarnate. Familiarity with this harmony between Matthew and John is evident in the canon tables of the late-sixth-century Syriac Rabbula Gospels, where contrasted evangelist author portraits of the elderly Matthew and youthful John flank Canon VII; the gospel books they hold are inscribed with the opening of Matthew 1:18 and John 1:1, respectively, even though these are not among the passages of concordance between the gospels of Matthew and John alone which are listed in that canon table.⁴

The tradition was well-known in the Latin West. Augustine’s *Harmony of the Gospels* shows that Matthew traces the human generation of Christ the Son of man who, by virtue of his heavenly and eternal generation described by John, is also the only-begotten Son of God.⁵ In the *Tome* of Leo the Great, endorsed at the Council of Chalcedon, the opening verse of Matthew’s genealogy and the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah cited by Matthew in his account of the virginal conception and birth of Christ (Matthew 1:18–23) are, following patristic tradition, read in the light of John’s testimony that it was the divine Word, co-eternal with the Father, who was [189] made flesh. The understanding that at the Incarnation, ‘the proper character of both natures was maintained and came together in a single person’, is fundamental to Leo’s articulation of belief in Christ as ‘the one Mediator between God and man’ (1 Timothy 2:5), through whom fallen humanity was redeemed and recreated.⁶ Chalcedon was affirmed in subsequent ecumenical councils and further clarified in the Lateran Council of 649, a copy of whose *acta* reached Wearmouth-Jarrow before the council of Hatfield in 679, which comprehensively acknowledged the general councils and the Lateran Council.⁷

St John in the early Insular world

The Insular reception of Christianity also involved reception of customary ways of interpreting Scripture. Patristic traditions concerning St John and his gospel appear in the canon tables and preliminary texts of early Insular gospel books. The Lindisfarne Gospels and several others include Jerome’s *Plures fuisse*, which

4 *The Rabbula Gospels. Facsimile Edition of the Miniatures of the Syriac Manuscript Plut. I, 56 in the Medicaean-Laurentian Library*, ed. C. Cecchelli, G. Furlani, and M. Salmi (Olten and Lausanne, 1959), 14.

5 Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum*, 2.2, Migne *PL* 34, 1071, trans. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (hereafter *NPNF*), 1st series, 6:102. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.11.8.

6 Ep. 28, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols., ed. N. P. Tanner (London, 1990), 1:77–78.

7 *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.17–18, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), 384–90.

was to become a common Vulgate preface.⁸ Here, as in the canon tables, the particular character of John's gospel is presented in the context of an exposition of both the harmony of the canonical fourfold gospel and the distinctive nature of each of its constituent gospels, presented by Jerome through pen portraits of the four human authors; he also links their respective gospel openings with their heavenly symbols, derived from the visions of Ezekiel and John, to whom the Apocalypse, like the fourth gospel, was ascribed (Ezekiel 1:4–12; Apocalypse 4:6–8). John is pictured as 'taking up the wings of an eagle and ascending to the heights' in his gospel opening on the Word of God. In Jerome's preface, John is 'the apostle and evangelist, whom Jesus loved most who, reclining on Jesus' bosom (John 13:23, 25; 21:20) drank heavily of the waters of purest doctrine, and was the only one thought worthy of the word from the cross, "Behold your mother" (John 19:27)'. The ecclesial authority of John's gospel is stressed in the summary of Eusebius's account of how, when various heresies were springing up, John was urged 'by almost all the bishops of Asia and by deputations from many churches to write more profoundly concerning the divinity of the Saviour'. First demanding a general fast and prayer, John, filled with revelation, burst into his heavenly prologue: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God' (John 1:1).⁹

The Book of Kells and other Irish Gospel Books contain the so-called Monarchian prefaces to the individual gospels. The *argumentum* for John provides a biography and apocryphal traditions emphasising the virginity of the beloved disciple, who was called by God from his own wedding, his writing of the gospel after the Apocalypse, and the circumstances of his death at Ephesus, free from the corruption of the flesh.¹⁰ Although the prefaces do not appear in all Insular gospels, the material was well known to Irish exegetes who, in the context of gospel commentaries, expounded the canon tables and prefaces normally found in Gospel Books.¹¹

Devotion to St John was shared by all sides in the Insular Easter controversy. In Bede's account of the Synod of Whitby in 664, Colman of Lindisfarne defended the Easter reckoning of the Columban monks and their adherents by claiming that 'we follow the example of that apostle who was reckoned worthy to recline on the breast of the Lord, for all the world acknowledges his great wisdom'. In reply, Wilfrid, the polemical Northumbrian spokesman for the *Romani*, refuted

8 For prefaces in particular Insular gospel books, P. McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books from A.D. 400 to A.D. 800* (Paris, 1961), 110–11.

9 Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (hereafter CCSL), 77: 1–4.

10 J. Chapman, *Notes on the Early History of the Vulgate Gospels* (Oxford, 1908), 218–19, 226–29.

11 J. O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions of the Evangelists: Exegesis and Iconography", in *Le Isole Britanniche e Roma in età romanobarbarica*, eds. A.M. Fuiselli and É. Ó Carragáin (Rome, 1998), 49–94: 66–77; Mullins, "Insular Reception of Eusebian Canon Tables", (as in note 3), 103–46.

what he regarded as Columban particularism in the dating of Easter, but did not question the holiness of St John.¹² Adomnán of Iona evoked John in his *Life of the visionary Columba*, while Wilfrid's biographer compared Wilfrid's exploits with apocryphal manifestations of power by the evangelist, apostle, and confessor John; Aldhelm wrote of John as [190] beloved disciple, virgin, and performer of miracles.¹³ Boisil of Melrose symbolically passed on his spiritual teaching to his pupil Cuthbert by reading John's gospel with him during the last seven days of his life, pondering the simple things of 'the faith which works by love'. Bede also continued to teach his spiritual sons during his last days and dictated to them his work on St John's gospel, 'which he was turning into our mother tongue, to the great profit of the Church'.¹⁴

Johannine Christology is fundamental to Bede's exegesis and twenty-one of his fifty gospel homilies are on liturgical readings from John's gospel.¹⁵ His homily for the Feast of John the Evangelist distils apocryphal tradition regarding John's life and death, his rejection of the married state, and the circumstances of his composition of the gospel and Apocalypse. He emphasises John's spiritual purity, his role as the beloved disciple who leaned on Christ's bosom, in which 'are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Colossians 2:2–3). From this source John revealed the hidden mysteries of divine truth; his teaching on Christ's co-eternal divinity with the Father 'drove out all the darkness of the heretics'. John was the truthful witness of the gospel events he recorded. Following Augustine, Bede presents John as the great exemplar of the contemplative life, directing the eye of his mind toward love alone, ardently desiring the heavenly life and already on earth having a foretaste of the joy of perpetual blessedness. But he is also an exponent of the active life, teaching others what he has received.¹⁶ Bede's homily on the Prologue of John's gospel extols John, who drank of holy wisdom from the most holy font of Jesus's breast, which enabled him, to an extent permitted to no other mortals, to recognise and reveal to others the eternal power of Christ's divinity. He likens John to the eagle, flying to heaven with the Lord; he shows how each phrase of the opening of John's gospel

12 *Historia Ecclesiastica* (as in note 7), 3.25: 300–301.

13 *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, eds. A.O. Anderson and M.O. Anderson (London, 1961), 3.18: 208; *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927), 15, 75, 91; *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. M. Lapidge and M. Herren (Cambridge, 1979), 80–81; *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works*, trans. M. Lapidge and J.L. Rosier, (Cambridge, 1985), 52–53; 113.

14 *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), 183; *Epistola de obitu Bedae in Ecclesiastical History* (as in note 7), 583. On the uncial copy of John's gospel found in Cuthbert's coffin (*olim* Stonyhurst, now London, British Library Additional MS 89000), Martin Werner, 'The Binding of the Stonyhurst Gospel of St John and St John', in *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton, 2011), 287–311.

15 S.D. Foley, 'Bede, St John and the Liturgical Year: Studies on the Homilies on the Gospels' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College Cork, 2010).

16 *Homiliae evangelii*, 1.9, CCSL 122: 60–67, trans. L. Martin and D. Hurst, *Bede: The Homilies on the Gospels*, 1, Cistercian Studies (hereafter CS) 110 (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1991), 85–94.

refutes a particular heresy. Bede densely expounds the theological and doctrinal importance of John's description of the two natures of Christ. He was born God from God yet deigned to become Son of Man, so that he might transform human beings into sons of God and might make them co-heirs of his glory, sharers in his divine power.¹⁷

Insular exegetical, homiletic, and hagiographic sources show close familiarity with patristic and apocryphal traditions on John and his gospel. The work of Bede and Alcuin was an important element in the transmission of this inheritance to the Carolingians and eventually to Ælfric and the monastic reformers of the late Anglo-Saxon world.¹⁸ The characterisation of St John and his gospel in the manuscript art of the Benedictine reform was to make inventive use of Carolingian art in which numerous figural and iconographic influences from Late Antiquity were assimilated. In the early Insular world, however, the process of assimilation and transformation had produced a distinctive visual language in Gospel Books featuring the interplay of ornament and letterforms, figure and frame, in which abstract motifs are repeated and varied, the part organically related to the whole by permutations of colour, shape, number, scale, and orientation.¹⁹ It has long been argued that such features might be conveyers of meaning intelligible within inherited traditions of interpreting the gospel text, as in the carpet-page and incipit of John's gospel in the Book of Durrow, fols. 192v–193 (see Nancy Netzer, 'New Finds Versus the Beginning of the Narrative on Insular Gospel Books', Figure 2, and Benjamin C. Tilghman, 'Writing in Tongues: Mixed Scripts and Style in Insular Art' in *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton, 2011), Figure 3).

The carpet-page is made up of six rectangular panels of interlaced animals around a central square containing a circle. Six quadrupeds flank the square; the circle within it is filled with three groups of knotwork. [191] Three small circles, each containing a stepped cross in a lozenge, are positioned within the circle's rim, as if at the points of an equilateral triangle. A Greek cross on a white disc, with three black triangular shapes around it, marks the centre of the main circle and of the whole design. In the light of the biblical and exegetical importance of numerology and the associations of the number six with creation, this, the only page in the Book of Durrow with zoomorphic ornament, has been read as alluding to the opening of John's gospel prologue, which it directly faces.²⁰ The displayed text, *In principio erat verbum* [. . .] *et deus erat verbum* [. . .] *omnia per ipsum*

17 *Hom.* 1.8: 52–59, trans. *CS* 110, 73–83.

18 J. Hill, "Bede and the Benedictine Reform", Jarrow Lecture (Jarrow, 1998).

19 The argument is compellingly made by M. Schapiro in the posthumous publication, *The Language of Forms: Lectures on Insular Manuscript Art* (New York, 2005).

20 G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: The Insular Gospel-Books, 650–800* (London, 1987), 41; M. Werner, "The Book of Durrow and the Question of Programme", *ASE* 26 (1997), 34–39. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.62–5, ed. and trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford, 1995), 87: "There

facta sunt [. . .] (John 1:1–3), recalls the opening of Genesis (*In principio deus creavit caelum et terram*), identifying the Word with the divine Creator of heaven and earth. Bede in his commentary on Genesis observed the providential ordering of creation:

It is well known that the number six is perfect because it is the first number made up of its own factors [. . .] Therefore God completed all the ornamentation of heaven and earth in six days, so that he who constituted all things ‘in measure, and number, and weight’ (Wisdom 11:21) might teach by the very number of days [. . .] that his works had been perfected.²¹

Patristic and Insular exegetes saw the creation of all the living creatures of the earth, including humankind, on the sixth and last day of creation (Genesis 1:24–31), as pre-figuring the sixth age of the world and its redemption and recreation, also on the sixth day of the week, by the incarnate Creator-Word at his passion.²²

In the Book of Durrow John’s gospel incipit is distinguished from the initial pages of the synoptic gospels by the greater scale of its ornamented monogram and continuation lettering; the coupled shafts and terminals of the initials ‘IN’ descend the entire depth of the page. All the remaining text is therefore arranged in short lines alongside it, the first six lines in large letters on stippled panels. The sixth line (*apud deum et deus* is at first sight unintelligible because the Greek letter *delta* is substituted for the ‘d’ in the contracted forms of the divine name (*dm* and *ds*). John’s prologue, identifying Christ with the Word or Logos, the second person of the Trinity, was a much-cited proof text of orthodox Trinitarian belief.²³ The three strokes forming the triangular *delta* have suggested this is not simply a piece of exoticism but, like the triads within the circle on the carpet-page, an allusion to the unity of the Trinity.²⁴ The deltas also complement the use of Greek

are in the sacred books certain abstruse analogies which are inaccessible to readers without a knowledge of number”.

21 *In Genesim*, CCSL 118A: 32, trans. C.B. Kendall, *On Genesis. Bede* (Liverpool, 2008), 96; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 11.30, CCSL 48: 350; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911) 3. 4, 5, 14, trans. S.A. Barney et al., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), 90, 91, 95.

22 Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 8, 39, CCSL 123A: 300, 402–404, trans. F. Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 1999), 32, 108–109, quotes Augustine’s exposition of the number six from *De Trinitate* 4.4.

23 Augustine, *De consensu*, 1.4, 6, Migne PL 34, 1045–47; *In iohannis evangelium* 36. 1; 5, CCSL 36: 323, 324, trans. NPNF, 1st series, 7: 208, 210.

24 V.H. Elbern, “Die Dreifaltigkeitsminiatur im Book of Durrow: eine Studie zur unfüßlichen Ikonographie im frühen Mittelalter”, *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 17 (1955), 7–42, pl. 1–3, fig. 16; M. Krasnodebska-D’Aughton, “Decoration of the *In Principio* Initials in Early Insular Manuscripts: Christ as a Visible Image of the Invisible God”, *Word & Image* 18 (2002), 105–22: 120, n. 40. See also Tilghman, ‘Writing in Tongues’ in *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Art*, ed. Hourihane, pp. 93–108.

letters in the *nomen sacrum* in the ornamented *chi-rho* at Matthew 1:18 (fol. 23), just as the small cross that appears over the letter *chi* is recalled in the similar cross positioned over the monogram of John's gospel opening. George Henderson has drawn attention to the total of forty-two animals on John's carpet-page and forty-two spirals on the carpet-page now at fol. 3v, which may once have prefaced Matthew's *Liber generationis* and its list of the forty-two generations of Christ's ancestors.²⁵

Visual links between the opening passages of Matthew and John, often connected in exegesis, are greatly elaborated in the Book of Kells. Creatures of earth, air, and water notably inhabit the *chi-rho* page opening Matthew's account of Christ's nativity; such images of creation might be thought a more suitable accompaniment for John's account of 'In the beginning'. Moreover, a [192] cosmological symbol in the form of a rhombus or lozenge is prominently displayed at the centre of the magnified initial letter *chi* of the *nomen sacrum*, revealing the incarnate Christ to be the Word, the divine Creator.²⁶ The outline of a golden stepped cross can also be traced at the crossing-point of the diagonals of the *chi*. Although all three Christological symbols – the *chi*, the lozenge, and the cross – feature in the ornament throughout the manuscript, they are only shown in combination and on this scale in one other place, the four-symbols page prefacing John's gospel.

The fourfold nature of the gospel had very early been justified and expounded by the Fathers through reference to the fourfold nature and divine measure of creation. The four-symbols page prefacing John's gospel in the Book of Kells, fol. 290v, features the lozenge-shaped symbol of the *tetragonus mundus* at the centre of a stepped cross set diagonally across the page, so that it may also be read as the *chi* of Christ's name (Plate 3.8). The four evangelist symbols are positioned around the lozenge at its four cardinal points and these cosmological directions are further marked by four ornamental panels projecting from the rectangular frame. The abstract image, which has parallels in cosmic schemata, suggests the revelation of the Word in his fourfold gospel, as in his fourfold creation.²⁷

A quadriform world is also depicted in the portrait page which follows on fol. 291v (Plate 7.1). Sets of quadripartite ornament fill the frame, which has four

25 Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells* (as in note 20), 41. The Hiberno-Latin commentary on Matthew in Munich, Staatsbibl., Clm. 6233, fols. 31–32, quotes John 1:1, identifying the Christ of Matthew's genealogy with the Word made flesh; also Bede's homily on Matthew 1:18–25: *Hom.* 1.5: 32, trans. CS 110, 44.

26 O.K. Werckmeister, *Irisch-Northumbrische Buchmalerei des 8. Jahrhunderts und monastische Spiritualität* (Berlin 1967), 147–70; S. Lewis, "Sacred Calligraphy: The *Chi-Rho* Page in the Book of Kells", *Traditio* 36 (1980), 139–59: 142–43; J. O'Reilly, "Gospel Harmony and the Names of Christ: Insular Images of a Patristic Theme", in *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition*, eds. J.L. Sharpe III and K. van Kampen (London, 1998), 73–88.

27 M. Caviness, "Images of Divine Order and the Third Mode of Seeing", *Gesta* 22 (1983), 99–121: 108, 119; F. Wallis, "Images of Order in the Medieval Computus", in *Ideas of Order in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Ginsberg, (Binghamton, 1990), 45–67; O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", (as in note 11), 77–94, pl. 3–5.



Plate 7.1 The Book of Kells. St John portrait. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS A.1.6 (58), fol. 291v.

shallow projections at the cardinal points, so that its whole outline forms a distinctively proportioned stepped cross. Four equilateral crosses filled with interlace stand at the cardinal points in the border, jutting into the four projections of the outer frame. From behind them emerge the head, hands, and feet of a figure in *syndesmos* pose whose body is concealed beneath the framed area of the gospel page.²⁸ Comparison has been made with the tradition surviving in later Genesis illustrations and *mappae mundi* in which the body of the Creator is concealed by a geometric, usually circular, representation of the world he has created. The extremities of the concealed figure in the Book of Kells, however, protrude from beneath a cruciform and cross-marked design and the small, youthful head emerges from between the inner and outer framing bands of the page.

One of the texts used in expositions of the Genesis account of creation and of John's gospel Prologue was the description of Christ as 'the image of the invisible God', the creator of all things and the redeemer, reconciling all things to God, making peace through the cross (Colossians 1:14–20).²⁹ John's Prologue also explains, 'No man has seen the Father at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him (*ipse enarravit*)' (John 1:18). The cruciform figure in Kells undergirds the sacred page, suggesting the creation and redemption of the world through the Word. But the figure is also partly hidden. In the context of the opening of John's gospel this may be a means of presenting the paradox that, although the invisible God is revealed through the Word – in creation, in the incarnation and in Scripture – the full mystery of the divinity of the Word remains veiled from mortal eye.

Overlaying the concealed figure is the imposing author portrait, frontally enthroned, with a mesmerising gaze and a halo of unparalleled size and magnificence, further augmented by the three roundels positioned on its outer rim. The Book of Kells makes greater use of the evangelist symbols than any other Insular manuscript, yet the portrait facing John's gospel opening is shown without an identifying evangelist symbol, so that the hieratic figure more readily evokes associations with Christ himself.³⁰ Augustine described how the Word, [193] 'that Wisdom of God by whom all things were created', is the author of the gospel in which he is revealed; it was written as though with his own hand.³¹ The Kells picture of authorship of the divine word suggests another act of creation. The figure holds up a book, an image of the Word; its cover is marked with the Christological

28 For the *syndesmos* pose in medieval schemata as a 'gesture of creation *in mensura et in numero et pondere*', by which the harmony of a fourfold creation is brought about, see A.C. Esmeier, *Divina Quaternitas: A Preliminary Study in the Method and Application of Visual Exegesis* (Amsterdam, 1978), 97–106.

29 See also John 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 1:10; Phil. 2:8–11.

30 J. Hamburger, *St John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley, 2002), 9, observes that the interlocking of the medallions of John's halo and the crosses in the frame encourages 'identification of the Evangelist with the Logos embodied in the Gospels'.

31 Augustine, *De consensu*, 1.35, Migne PL 34, 1070, trans. NPNF 6 (as in note 5), 101.

signs of the lozenge and the *chi*. At his feet there is an inkwell and in his right hand he holds a reed pen the size of a sceptre.

No specific text is here being claimed as the 'source' of the Kells portrait, but the patristic tradition of discerning multiple metaphors of Christ in biblical references to scribes and their tools offers some sense of the kind of associations the image of the pen may have suggested in this particular context. The opening of John's gospel, for example, was seen as the key to the spiritual interpretation of a much-quoted psalm text, and was in turn illuminated by it: *eructavit cor meum verbum bonum* [. . .] *lingua mea calamus scribae velociter scribentis*: 'My heart has uttered a good word [. . .] my tongue is the pen of a scribe that writes swiftly' (Psalms 44 (45):2).³² Cassiodorus explained that in uttering this psalm of praise the psalmist compared his tongue to a scribe's pen, swiftly transcribing the words of the Holy Spirit, like a stenographer. The 'good word' which he writes refers to 'the Son of God, of whom the Evangelist John said: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"'.³³ Ambrose interpreted the psalm as referring to Christ through all three images: the word, the pen, and the scribe. Christ is the 'good word' the psalmist uttered, because he is the Word who proceeds mysteriously from the Father; he is the pen (*calamus*) because when he was made flesh he obeyed the orders of the Father's tongue by pouring out his sacred blood (like ink); he is a scribe 'because by his pen he has made known to us the mysteries of his Father's dispensation'. Ambrose here explains that a pen has a cleft tip yet the two parts are not separated, which, he says, can be taken to represent the divinity and humanity of Christ.³⁴ Through this series of metaphysical conceits Ambrose describes anew the redemption of the world through the incarnation of the divine Word.

Augustine's interpretation of Psalm 44:2 plays on the Genesis image of God speaking creation into existence and John's opening account of the eternally begotten Creator-Word. He explains that in Psalm 44:2 it is God the Father who is speaking and who utters forth the 'good word', meaning the Word by whom all things were made (John 1:3). The psalm likens the tongue of God to the scribe's pen because 'what is spoken by the tongue sounds once and passes away, whereas what is written remains. God utters a Word which does not pass away'. He is therefore likened to a swift scribe because he writes everything in one Word, in which nothing is omitted and all things are contained.³⁵ Seen in the hand of the

32 In Jerome's *Plures fuisse* and derivatives the verb *eructavit* (literally, belched forth) is used to describe the action of John in proclaiming his gospel Prologue. See the tenth-century colophon to the Lindisfarne Gospels, fol. 259r: Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels* (as in note 2), 102, fig. 45a.

33 Cassiodorus, *Expositio in psalmorum*, CCSL 97–98; 97:403–404, trans. P. Walsh, *Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms*, Ancient Christian Writers (hereafter *ACW*), 51–53 (New York, 1990–91), 51: 441.

34 Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, 5.105, CCSL 14:169–70. The interpretation of *calamus* is partly transmitted by Isidore, *Etymologiae* 6.14, 3, trans. Barney (as in note 21), 142.

35 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, CCSL 38: 496–97, trans. *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 149.

authorial figure in the Book of Kells, the *calamus* of improbable size may have been richly allusive of the Word proclaimed in the facing text.

Related uses of the term *calamus* (literally, reed) in well-known scriptural visions may have fed the imagination of the artist who pictured the unusual size and form of the pen in the Kells portrait. Gregory the Great identified the man with 'a measuring-reed in his hand' (Ezekiel 40:3), who measures the cosmological temple in Ezekiel's vision, as Christ. Noting that scribes write with reeds and that Christ allowed his words to be written down for us, Gregory said that the *calamus mensurae* can signify the hidden dimensions or mysteries of Scripture, given to few to discern. In the Apocalypse the visionary John is given 'a reed (*calamus*) like a rod (*virga*)' with which to measure the heavenly temple. Alluding to the common understanding of *calamus* as a reed pen (as in [196] Psalms 44:2), Bede spiritually interpreted the phrase *et datus est mihi calamus similis virgae* (Apocalypse 11:1) as meaning that John was given the office of writing the gospel. He likened the *calamus* that John received to a particular *virga*, the metaphorical rod or sceptre of righteousness of the kingdom of God, *virgae aequitatis*, *virgae regni dei* (Psalms 44:7), for it describes Christ's eternal kingdom.³⁶

In contrast to the Kells image, St John in the Lindisfarne Gospels is shown as part of a classicising set of evangelist portraits which are accompanied by images of their symbols.³⁷ The unity of style, scripts, and frames conveys the harmony of the evangelists' witness, while their differences of age and physiognomy, gestures and garments, inscriptions and symbols indicate the individual character of each gospel, as is further demonstrated in the four double openings of carpet-page and incipit that follow the respective portraits. Matthew, Mark and Luke are shown not as classical authors but as scribes, seated in three-quarter poses and displaying variations within their shared task, but the most notable difference is between them and the fourth evangelist, who alone is shown as a frontal figure and without writing equipment, fol. 209v (see Werner, in *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought*, ed. Hourihane, Figure 15).

The figure's majestic stature is emphasised by his centrality, by the strong horizontal and vertical lines of the wide bench on which he is enthroned, by the great folds of his purple pallium, and by the repetition of the yellow and gold colouring of his halo in the abstract shapes arranged around his head and upper body: the eagle's halo, the Gospel Book he holds, and the three blocks of the panelled inscription, *O agios iohannes*, which is the only inscription in this set of portraits to have a solid coloured backing and to contain three lozenge-shaped letter forms. The upward flight and gaze of the eagle, who emerges from behind John's halo, pictures the traditional comparison of the bird's legendary unique

36 Gregory, *Homelie in Ezechielem*, 2.11, *CCSL* 142; Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, *CCSL* 121A: 367.

37 London, B.L., Cotton Ms. Nero D.iv. Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels* (as in note 2), 346–70, pl. 8, 14, 18, 22.

ability to look directly at the sun with St John's mystical ascent to loftier spiritual heights than the other evangelists in order to see the divinity of Christ. Augustine described John as soaring like an eagle above the clouds of human infirmity to gaze upon 'the light of the unchangeable truth with those keenest and steadiest eyes of the heart'.³⁸ The term *oculis cordis* (Ephesians 1:18) refers to that inner illumination that anticipates the heavenly life of seeing God as he is; it pre-supposes the purity of heart of which the beatitudes speak: 'Blessed are the pure in heart (*beati mundo corde*), for they shall see God' (Matthew 5:8).³⁹ In the Lindisfarne portrait St John's outward stare suggests the gaze of the inner eye.

The contemplative or expository gesture of John's right hand across his chest may further allude to the closeness of the beloved disciple to the mysteries of Christ. At the Last Supper he leaned on the Lord's bosom, *in sinu Iesu* (John 13:23), the source of divine wisdom that inspired John's gospel Prologue, including the description of the only begotten Son as being in the hidden counsels or in the bosom of the Father, *in sinu patris* (John 1:18), and therefore able to make him known.⁴⁰ By tradition, John wrote his gospel many years later, but here he remains a youthful beardless figure; apocryphal and exegetical sources stressed the virginity of the beloved disciple, which was an outward sign of spiritual purity. Bede explained that John's special privilege was reserved for a virgin so that he might proclaim 'the mysteries of the incorruptible Word, having not only an incorruptible heart, but also an incorrupt body'.⁴¹

The quadripartite form and mathematical harmony of the cross carpet-page before John's gospel in the Lindisfarne Gospels fol. 210v, are particularly marked.⁴² The three lozenges displayed on the monogram formed by [197] the three initials of the facing gospel incipit on fol. 211 may allude to the Trinitarian associations of the gospel prologue.⁴³ A youthful human face, which in the Book of Kells emerges from the *chi-rho* announcing Christ's birth, is here formed in the letter 'c' of *In principio*. Early patristic exposition of the connection between

38 *De consensu*, 1.6, 4, trans. *NPNF* 6 (as in note 5), 81, 79; *In iohannis evangelium* 36.1, 5, *CCSL* 36: 323, 327, trans. *NPNF* 7 (as in note 23), 208, 210.

39 A recurring theme: Augustine, *In iohannis evangelium*, 1.7, 3.18, 53.12, *CCSL* 36: 4, 28, 458, trans. *NPNF* 7, 9, 24, 295; Bede, *Hom.* 1.2: 11, trans. *CS* 110 (as in note 16), 14.

40 *Recumbens unus ex discipulis eius in sinu Iesu quem diligebat Iesus* [...] *supra pectus Iesu* (John 13:23, 25; 21:20); *Deum nemo vidit umquam unigenitus filius qui est in sinu patris ipse enarravit* (John 1:18). See especially Bede on John 1:18, *Hom.* 1.2:11–12, trans. *CS* 110 (as in note 16), 14–16. Cummian, c. 632, describes the apostle who reclined on Christ's bosom (*qui super pectus domini recumbens*) as "St John the breastplated" (*iohannis petali*); in Irish vernacular sources he is known as "John of the Breast" (*Eoin Bruinne*): *Cummian's Letter de Controversia Paschali*, ed. M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (Toronto, 1988), 69 and n. 89.

41 *Hom.* 1.9:66–67, trans. *CS* 110 (as in note 16), 94.

42 R. Stevick, *The Earliest Irish and English Bookarts: Visual and Poetic Forms before A.D. 1000* (Philadelphia, 1994) 196–210; O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", (as in note 11), 90–92.

43 On the Insular monogram, see D'Aughton, "*In principio* initials", (as in note 24), 105, 114.

the opening of Genesis and of John's gospel had linked the Creator's words, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness' (Genesis 1:26), to John's account of the incarnation, 'The Word was made flesh' (John 1:14). Both texts were related to the description of Christ as 'the image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15).⁴⁴ Through the incarnation of the Word, God enabled humankind, in whom the divine image and likeness had been corrupted, to be restored. Bede's homily on John's Prologue describes how the invisible Wisdom of God put on human flesh in which he could be seen and so 'brought hearts purified by faith to the recognition of his divine image'.⁴⁵

In the Book of Armagh, c. 807, a four-symbols page faces Matthew's incipit. The line drawing shows full-length creatures of the Insular 'terrestrial' type, but each with four wings; the eagle, seen in diagonal ascent, has a fish in its talons. The lion and calf re-appear on whole pages facing their respective gospel openings but, unusually, the eagle re-appears at the bottom of the first page of John's text, fol. 90, with both pairs of wings stretched out horizontally immediately beneath the two columns of minuscule script, as though bearing up their momentous words (Figure 7.1). The eagle's wings are marked with small roundel heads of the lion, calf, and man, suggesting the spiritual harmony of the gospels. The eagle again holds a fish, whose Greek name, *ichthys*, was a well-known early Christian acrostic of the initials of sacred names that in themselves form a credo: 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour'. In the text pages of the Book of Kells a small fish is sometimes wittily used as an abbreviation mark over the contracted Greek name of Jesus (*ih̄s*), simultaneously expanding and expounding it, but in the Book of Armagh its appearance over the *xpi* abbreviating Christ's title at Matthew 1:18 makes a striking link with the fish in the claws of John's eagle at the opening of his gospel.⁴⁶ John's gospel is further distinguished from the other three by the decorative calligraphy of its closing words, written in a lozenge-shaped block, fol. 103.⁴⁷

Irish pocket Gospel Books characteristically have illuminated initials at the gospel openings, faced by evangelist portraits, most usually seen standing and without their symbols. The Book of Dimma has three unaccompanied evangelist portraits, but John's gospel is alone prefaced by a full-page image of the eagle.⁴⁸ He is not shown 'like a flying eagle', as in John's apocalyptic vision

44 Ambrose, *Hexameron*, 6.7.41, Migne *PL* 14, 257. The plural form of Genesis 1:26 was understood to proclaim the unity of the indivisible Trinity: Bede, *In Genesim*: 32, trans. Kendall, *On Genesis*, 90, 92.

45 *Hom.* 1.8: 55, trans. *CS* 110, 77.

46 Dublin, Trinity College Lib., 52, fol. 33v: J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts, 6th to the 9th Century* (London, 1978), cat. 53, fig. 227.

47 H. Richardson, "Biblical Imagery and the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh and the Book of Kells", in *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Transmission*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Dublin, 2002), 205–14, figs. 3, 8.

48 Dublin, Trinity College Lib., A.4.23 (59), p. 104: Alexander, *Insular Mss.*, cat. 48, fig. 225.

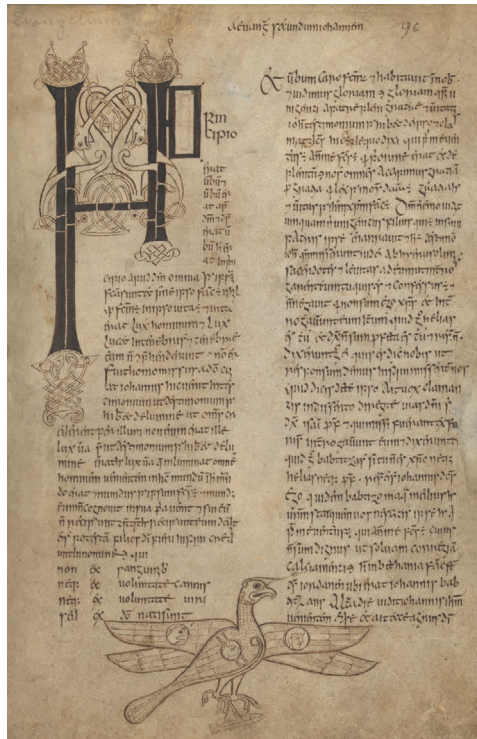


Figure 7.1 The Book of Armagh. In principio and eagle. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 52, fol. 90.

(Apocalypse 4:7), but in heraldic pose with haloed profile head, frontal body and four wings (Ezekiel 1:6). It was unusual for standing evangelists to be accompanied by their symbols; the two elements have separate iconographic origins and their combination could be problematic in a limited space. The solution in the Stowe St John portrait was to show the eagle's profile head and frontal body rising above the upper frame.⁴⁹ In the later eighth-century St Gall Gospels there are two standing evangelist portraits but only John's portrait includes his identifying symbol overhead, p. 208 (Plate 9.9).⁵⁰ The frame remains intact so the eagle has to be accommodated in horizontal pose with profile head, body, and folded wing and the evangelist's mystical ascent is conveyed by other means. The impassive frontal image of John, with disproportionately large head and dilated pupils,

49 Dublin, Royal Irish Academy Ms. D.II.3, fol. 11v: Alexander, *Insular Mss.*, (as in note 46), cat. 47, fig. 209.

50 St Gall, Stiftsbibl., Cod. 51, p. 208: Alexander, *Insular Mss.*, (as in note 46), cat. 44, fig. 208.

presents a counterpart to patristic evocations of his spiritual vision: 'This is John, the preacher of sublime truths, and a contemplator with steady gaze of the inner and eternal light'.⁵¹ [198]

John's face is at the apex of a triangular arrangement of three circles. Two circles containing concentric blue inner frames and spiral ornament are prominently placed at the mid-point of the two side-frames. The triangle is completed by the circle of the evangelist's halo, which also has a blue inner frame, formed by the curvilinear blue locks of his hair and extended by the curved band of blue drapery at his neck. In the Book of Kells, fol. 291v, three circular medallions are arranged in a similar triangular relationship, but positioned around the outer rim of the densely ornamented halo that frames and accentuates the face of John and probably alludes to the Trinitarian theology of his gospel, in which the divinity of the Word is crucial. In both portraits John's compelling stare draws the viewer to ponder the evangelist's spiritual vision.

In the facing incipit the sequence of gospel openings in the St Gall Gospels is brought to a climax. The page is complementary to the other three incipits in terms of design, ornament, and palette, but is on a considerably larger scale and the massive panelled columns of the monogram magnify the concentration of interlace and other abstract motifs in the panelled borders of the evangelist portrait (Plate 9.10). John's gospel opening alone has the continuation letters written in Insular majuscule and gives the whole of the first verse: *IN Principio erat uerbum et uerbum erat apud dm and ds erat uerbum.*

St John in the late Anglo-Saxon world

In the post-Viking period, Anglo-Saxon manuscript art was open to continental influences that accompanied ecclesiastical renewal and the Benedictine monastic reform from the mid-tenth century. The needs of patrons and developments in liturgy, devotional practices, and spirituality, as well as the stylistic influences, ornamental vocabulary, and expanded iconographic range introduced by incoming images, brought about considerable changes in late Anglo-Saxon *ars sacra*. There were also elements of continuity with the art of the early Insular world and familiarity with the patristic sources underlying Insular concepts of St John, known directly and through the work of Bede and Carolingian writers. Images of St John continued to exemplify, though with greater diversity, traditions of *lectio divina* that were transmitted and transformed not only through biblical exegesis, but through a wide variety of literary genres, through liturgy and the divine office, homilies, private prayers, vernacular poetry, and visual art. St John was pictured in new settings but also in the traditional context of evangelist portraits in Gospel Books. Though stimulated by Carolingian responses to the figural art of Late Antiquity, most notably in the Utrecht Psalter,

51 Augustine, *In iohannis evangelium* 36.5: 327, trans. NPNF 7 (as in note 23), 210.

late Anglo-Saxon manuscript art adapted such influences in distinctive ways. It was iconographically inventive in imaging the theology of the invisible Trinity, depicting the Incarnation and the Crucifixion, devising sequences of images, and in the use of inscriptions, all of which had consequences for the representation of St John.

One example of incoming Continental manuscripts that influenced Anglo-Saxon works is the late ninth- or early tenth-century Coronation Gospels from Lobbes, possibly received from Otto the Great and presented by Æthelstan to Christ Church, Canterbury.⁵² Its naturalism and relative spatial depth contrast with the idiom of the St Gall Gospels and the approach to late antique conventions seen in most early Insular works. St John is set beyond a classicising architectural arch in a vestigial landscape. He is not presented as a frontal hieratic figure but in vigorous three-quarter pose with his head in profile. The evangelist leans over his gospel, which is prominently displayed on the golden lozenge formed by the tilted lectern. He has just written *In principio erat* in letters of gold. John is shown between earth and heaven, his whole body yearns upwards in a powerful diagonal, his halo touches the curtain of cloud whose heavenly blue also colours his hair and the sleeve of his writing arm. His eye is fixed on the eagle hovering above and before him in the cloud, which holds prophetic scrolls in his talons and turns in his ascent to look at John.⁵³ Their charged exchange and the inscription from the *Carmen Paschale* of Sedulius present the inspired [202] evangelist: *More volans aquilae verbo petit astra Iohannes* (John, flying like an eagle, seeks the heavens in the Word).⁵⁴

There are broad similarities of pose and composition in the portrait of St John in the Benedictional of Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester, c. 973, but it is transformed by the different handling of space, form, and ornament (Figure 7.2). Though drawn from earlier gospel book traditions of evangelist portraits, it appears in the context of another kind of service book; the portrait faces the text of episcopal benedictions for the saint's own feast-day.⁵⁵ The young beardless evangelist is seated in three-quarter view on a draped architectural

52 London, BL Tiberius A ii, fol. 164v: J. Backhouse, D.H. Turner and L. Webster, ed., *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966–1066* (London, 1984), cat. 3.

53 M. Schapiro, "Two Romanesque Drawings in Auxerre and some Iconographic Problems", in *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene*, ed. D. Miner (Princeton, 1954), 331–49; H.L. Kessler, "*Facies bibliotheca revelata*: Carolingian Art as Spiritual Seeing", repr. in *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia, 2000), 149–89:174–83 for St John and Augustine's three modes of seeing.

54 "In him you perceive one who has passed beyond the cloud in which the whole earth is wrapped, and who has reached the liquid heaven from which, with clearest and steadiest mental eye, he is able to look upon God the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and by whom all things were made" (John 1:1, 3), Augustine, *De consensu*, 1.4, Migne PL 34, 1045, trans. NPNF 6 (as in note 5), 79, followed by Bede, *Hom.* 1.8:52–53, trans. CS 110, (as in note 16), 73–74, and Alcuin, *Epist. ad Gislam et Richtrudam*, Migne PL 100, 742.

55 London, B.L. Ms. Add. 49598, fols. 19v–20.



Figure 7.2 St John, Benedictional of St Æthelwold. © The British Library Board. Ms. Add. 49598, fol. 19v.

throne before a draped lectern. Swathes of curtain are looped back, revealing behind his head and breast the cloud-filled celestial regions also inhabited by his symbolic eagle, which is hovering with upraised wings above the lectern. The two are confronted in close proximity but the evangelist is not shown in the act of writing his inspired text. The eagle looks upwards and blows a golden horn, trumpeting the gospel, which John in turn teaches; he does not hold a pen but makes a gesture of speech and looks towards the Gospel Book he holds, which is inscribed, *In principio erat verbum et verbu(m)*.⁵⁶ Ambrose held that although all the evangelists and apostles are saints, ‘St John, who was the last to write his gospel [. . .] and was chosen by Christ, poured forth the eternal mysteries by a kind of greater trumpet’.⁵⁷ Trumpets announce divine commands, mysteries,

56 Two Evangelist symbols in the Lindisfarne Gospels and some in late Anglo-Saxon Gospel Books have trumpets: E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (London, 1976), cat. 47, 68, 73, 301.

57 Ambrose, *De sacramentis* 3.211, *Sources chrétiennes* 25: 98–99.

and the end of time in Scripture; in patristic and Insular literature they represent the Scriptures and the prophets and evangelists, the apostles and their successors, who by writing and teaching act as the voice or mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit to God's people.⁵⁸

In his magisterial study of the Benedictional of Æthelwold, Robert Deshman analysed the manuscript's uses of the motif of iridescent cloud to veil or clothe divinity and to visualise the patristic image of apostolic and evangelical teaching as heavenly clouds filled with life-giving words.⁵⁹ The trumpet and clouds in the portrait of John, signalling the divine eloquence of his teaching, are complemented by the benedictions that begin on the facing recto; image and text are visually linked by their magnificent acanthus frames, fols. 19v–20. The first prayer invokes the blessing of Almighty God, 'through the intercession [203] of the blessed apostle and evangelist John, through whom he wished to reveal the secrets of his Word (*archana uerbi*) to the Church'. The bishop then prays that the recipients of his blessings may, through the Holy Spirit, receive in their minds what John, inspired by the gift of the Holy Spirit, poured into their ears, so that, 'having been instructed by his lesson of the divinity of our Redeemer, and by loving what he has related, and by preaching what he has taught, and by carrying out what he has commanded', they might be found worthy to attain the rewards promised by the same Lord Jesus Christ.⁶⁰ St John is here presented as teacher, intercessor and exemplar.

The evangelist author portraits in the late tenth-century Boulogne Gospels of St Bertin, by an Anglo-Saxon artist, are inscribed with the appropriate lines from the *Carmen Paschale* that link the evangelists, their symbols and their gospel openings.⁶¹ The portraits also form part of an inventive program of prefatory figural illuminations and inscriptions that characterise each gospel's revelation of the identity of Christ. John's opening testimony on the divinity of the incarnate Word may be further understood through comparison with the gospel opening of Matthew, where the human genealogy of 'Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1) and his birth in time are presented in a remarkable four-page figural sequence, which contrasts with the exposition of the two texts in the Books of Durrow and Kells through the abstract signs linking the opening of John and the *chi-rho* at Matthew 1:18.

In the Boulogne evangelist portrait of Matthew he is seen writing, accompanied by the figures named first in the genealogy, David and Abraham, Isaac

58 Jerome, *Comm. in Matheum*, CCSL 77: 230; M. Lapidge, "Some Remnants of Bede's Lost Liber Epigrammatum", *EHR* 90 (1975), 798–820:819.

59 R. Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, (Princeton, 1995), 109–115, pl. 15.

60 Full text and translation, Deshman, *Benedictional* (as in note 59), 111.

61 Boulogne, Bibl. Mun. 11, Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (as in note 56), cat. 44; R. Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford, 1995), 41, 132–33; B. Raw, *Trinity and Incarnation in Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought* (Cambridge, 1997), 136–39.

and Jacob (fol. 10v). They are followed by an arcaded gallery of portraits of the remaining Old Testament ancestors of Christ, leading to scenes of the Lucan account of the Annunciation and Visitation (fols. 11, 11v) and then the Nativity, depicted in registers alongside the words of the incipit, *Liber generationis* (fol. 12).⁶² The prominence of the angelic annunciation to the shepherds (Luke 2:8–20) above the scenes of the Virgin and of the Christ child, adored by ox and ass, may recall a further exegetical link with John’s gospel. Bede had harmonised the response of the shepherds on hearing the angel’s announcement of the birth of the Saviour in the city of David, ‘Let us see this word that has come to be (*videamus hoc verbum quod factum est*)’ (Luke 2:15), with John’s gospel opening, *In principio erat verbum* [. . .] *et Deus erat verbum*. Like Jerome, Bede explains that ‘The Word born of the Father was not made (*non factum est*) because God is not a creature. In this divine nativity he could not be seen by human beings, but in order that he might be seen, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: *verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*”’ (John 1:14).⁶³

John’s gospel is prefaced by a portrait of the evangelist, fol. 107, with head and torso in three-quarter view, seated at a draped lectern in an exedra and next to a draped altar beneath a baldachin (Figure 7.3).⁶⁴ The eagle in vertical ascent grasps in its talons a book inscribed with the opening verse of the gospel Prologue, but looks heavenwards so that the visual interaction between evangelist and symbol is here missing. Unexpectedly, there is a dove on John’s shoulder; John was sometimes described as being inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the iconography recalls that used in Carolingian and Ottonian author portraits of Gregory the Great. The dove is already present in the earliest *Life of Gregory*, an eighth-century Anglo-Saxon work, which presents Gregory as sharing in some of St John’s characteristics. It says of Gregory’s writings that ‘Christ spoke through him’; he received his heavenly skill from him who is ‘the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory’ (1 Corinthians 2:7).⁶⁵ Gregory saw that the incarnate only begotten Son, described by [204] John, was revealed in Ezekiel’s vision of the four living creatures. The *Life* recounts that the heavens were opened to Gregory, as to Ezekiel, and the Lord revealed Christ to him, this descent of the Holy Spirit being witnessed in the miracle of the white dove that was seen to rest upon Gregory as he wrote his homilies on Ezekiel.⁶⁶

62 T. Ohlgren, *Anglo-Saxon Textual Illustration* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1992), pl. 5.18–5.21.

63 Jerome, *Epistulae*, 108.10, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (hereafter *CSEL*) 55, 316; Bede, *Hom.* 1.7: 47, trans. CS 110 (as in note 16), 67; also Bede, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, *CCSL* 120: 53, where he merges John 1:1, 14: *In principio erat uerbum et uerbum caro factum est*.

64 *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David*, ed. K. van der Horst, W. Noel, and W. Wüstefeld (Utrecht, 1996), 244, color fig. 32a.

65 *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1968), 24:117, 119.

66 *Life of Gregory*, 26:121, 123.

In the Boulogne portrait John the Evangelist is a monumental figure, sitting with his pen poised above his book. The divine inspiration of his inner vision is conveyed through the wide-eyed intensity of his stare and by the dove of the Holy Spirit breathing the words of the gospel Prologue in his ear.⁶⁷ The significance of what John is about to write is expounded in the formal presentation of his words which, unusually, follow on the verso of the portrait, fol. 107v (Figure 7.4). The Franco-Saxon initial letter 'I' of *In principio* is enlarged and centrally positioned as the axis of the whole page; foliage burgeons from its base and heavenly stars pattern the mandorla which overlays its upper part. The mandorla, attended by two adoring angels, encloses an image of Christ enthroned in glory and flanked by the letters *alpha* and *omega* (now rather faint and sometimes overlooked). The rest of the incipit is displayed in golden capitals on either side of the lower half of the historiated initial letter 'I': *In principio erat verbum et verbum erat [apud deum]*. It is expounded by an echoing inscription overhead, also in golden capitals and arranged either side of the initial: *Principium finisque patris verbum deus hic est*.⁶⁸ [205]

In the Old Testament the divine Creator and redeemer of Israel proclaims himself to be the only God, the first and the last: *ego primus et ego novissimus* (Isaiah 44:6). The title is amplified in John's opening vision in the Apocalypse: *ego sum alpha et omega, principium et finis dicit Dominus Deus*: 'I am *alpha* and *omega*, says the Lord God, the beginning and the end, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty' (Apocalypse 1:8). Repeated in variant forms and in the closing vision, *ego sum alpha et omega, primus et novissimus, principium et finis* (Apocalypse 22:13), this epithet of God Almighty is applied to the glorified Christ. In his influential Apocalypse commentary Bede notes that in Apocalypse 1:8 the words were said of the Father who will come again in the Son. One of the commentary's main sources, Primasius, showed how the title represents the consubstantiality and unity of the Father and the Son and also the unity of the Holy Spirit, because the numerical equivalent of *alpha* and *omega* is the same as for *peristera*, meaning dove.⁶⁹ Commenting on the title in Apocalypse 1:17, Bede quotes from John's gospel Prologue to explain that Christ is the first, because by him all things were made (John 1:3), and he is the last because by him all things are restored (Ephesians 1:10).⁷⁰ The context of the Ephesians passage speaks of

67 For variants in portraits of John, see J. Rosenthal and P. McGurk, "Author, Symbol and Word: The Inspired Evangelists in Judith of Flanders's Anglo-Saxon Gospel Books", in *Tributes to Jonathan J.G. Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, Art, and Architecture*, ed. S. L'Engle and G.B. Guest (Turnhout/London, 2006), 185–202: 190, figs. 10, 12, 20c.

68 Gameson, *Role of Art* (as in note 61), 87–90, 132–33, pl. 8; Raw, *Trinity and Incarnation* (as in note 61), 136–40.

69 Noted by E.A. Matter, "The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis", in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (Cornell, 1992), 44.

70 Bede, *Exp. Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A: 239–41; 249: *primus, quia omnia per ipsum facta sunt, nouissimus, quia in ipso restaurantur omnia*.



Figure 7.3 The Boulogne Gospels. St John. Boulogne, Bibliothèque Municipale. MS 11, fol. 107.

Christ ‘before the foundations of the world’, in whom, in the fullness of time, ‘all things that are in heaven and earth’ will be reestablished. Commenting on the titles in Apocalypse 22:13, Bede sees the letters *alpha* and *omega* as signifying Christ’s divinity and humanity.⁷¹

The opening words of John’s gospel in the Boulogne Gospels are thus affirmed by the image on the incipit initial and the accompanying *titulus*. The letters *alpha* and *omega* and the words *principium finisque*, titles recalling the eternal divinity of God, are applied to Christ. The inscription declares: *Principium finisque patris verbum deus hic est* (‘The beginning and the end: this is the Word of the Father, God’) and the cross-nimbus of the enthroned figure shows that the divine Word, co-eternal with the Father, was made flesh.

The teaching of John’s Prologue on the pre-existent divinity of Christ and his equality with the Father was fundamental to the patristic and conciliar defence

71 *Exp. Apocalypseos*: 571.



Figure 7.4 The Boulogne Gospels. In principio. Boulogne, Bibliothèque Municipale. MS 11, fol. 107v.

of Trinitarian belief, which excited lively interest in the period of monastic reform.⁷² One of the numerous examples of late Anglo-Saxon experiments in visualising the constituent elements of Trinitarian theology appears in the context of John's gospel in the Grimbold Gospels from Christ Church Canterbury, c. 1020.⁷³ In a spectacular double opening, John the Evangelist is shown frontally enthroned, but with an upward turn of his head is brought into close engagement with his hovering symbol at the moment of divine revelation (Figures 7.5 and 7.6). Both hold prophetic scrolls or *rotuli* whose sinuous lines, like the long curve of John's pen, the cascading folds of drapery and the eagle's upswept pinions, are held in counterpoint with the lapidary inscription in majestic golden capitals on the facing page: *In principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud d(eu)m et d(eu)s erat verbum*.

⁷² Raw, *Trinity and Incarnation* (as in note 61), 1–76.

⁷³ London, BL Add. Ms. 34890; Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (as in note 56), cat. 68.



Figure 7.5 The Grimbold Gospels. St John portrait. © The British Library Board. Add. MS 34890, fol. 114v.

The matched frames of the portrait and incipit, sumptuously edged in silver and gold, are each set with eight medallions, placed at the four corners and the four cardinal points. The two pages form a diptych (fols. 114v–115). On the left, in the border above the evangelist, the divinity of Christ, the Word, is proclaimed in an image that shows him to be a member of the Trinity. The three distinct persons of the triune deity are shown separately, each enthroned in a mandorla within a roundel medallion and adored by angels, the unity of the Godhead suggested by their identity of form, save for the cross-nimbus worn by the central figure. In the corresponding central roundel on the facing page, an image of the Virgin and Child similarly enthroned within a mandorla shows the Word made flesh and adored by angels in the same manner as the three enthroned figures in the opposite border. This reflects the belief that when the divine Word assumed humanity at



Figure 7.6 The Grimbold Gospels. In principio. © The British Library Board. Add. MS 34890, fol. 115r.

his incarnation his divinity was undiminished and the two natures were contained, complete and unconfused, in one person. The ever-virgin Mary was, therefore, ‘mother not only of the human being Christ, but also of God’.⁷⁴ The Grimbold Gospels [206] scene of the Incarnation shows that the humanity of Christ shares in the glory of his eternal divinity.

The seraphim in the two roundels flanking the incarnate Word recall the two seraphim who worship the exalted and enthroned Lord in Isaiah’s vision (Isaiah 6:1–9). Noting that John the Evangelist himself interpreted this passage as a vision of Christ (John 12: 36–41), Jerome saw the threefold acclamation of the

⁷⁴ *Non solum hominis Christi sed et Dei genetrix*: Bede on John 1:14, *Hom.* 1.8: 59, trans. CS 110 (as in note 16), 82; Council of Ephesus, Tanner, *Decrees* (as in note 6), 58.

seraphim, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts: all the earth is full of his glory’ (Isaiah 6:3), as revealing that in both Testaments the Trinity is made known. He saw the last phrase, *plena est omnis terra gloria eius*, as referring to the advent of the incarnate Saviour, preached by the apostles through all the earth.⁷⁵ In the New Testament the seraphic hymn is recalled in the threefold *sanctus* chanted by the living creatures around the divine throne in St John’s apocalyptic vision: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come’ (Apocalypse 4:8). Patristic commentators and Bede interpreted the chant as the perpetual praise of the omnipotent and eternal Trinity by the heavenly host and the twenty-four elders who cast their crowns before the throne (Apocalypse 4:10–11) and represent the whole Church.⁷⁶ The triple *sanctus* of the eucharist on earth participates in this heavenly liturgy.

From the side and lower borders of both pages in the Grimbald Gospels, twenty-four crowned figures look up and join with the angels in acclaiming the triune Godhead. In the roundel beneath the feet of St John is a tiny [207] scene of angels bearing up the souls of the faithful. Peter, Paul, and attendant apostles are prominent in the pair of roundels flanking John’s portrait. They are the foundational members of the Church and foremost, after the Virgin, in the Communicantes prayer in the Eucharist which celebrates the unity of the body of Christ on earth and in heaven.⁷⁷ In each of the two corresponding roundels on the facing page, a priest in eucharistic vestments is flanked by two kings. Other triads of figures, drawn from the whole Church, fill the remaining five roundels; priests and kings, laymen, monks and virgins all look up in attitudes of acclamation. The composite borders do not literally illustrate either the Apocalypse or the Last Judgment, or comprehensively depict the heavenly choirs, but picture doctrinal, spiritual, and eschatological implications of John’s mystical vision.

Bede repeatedly described the spiritual life on earth and the life of heaven in terms of seeing God. In his Christmas homily on John’s gospel Prologue, he explained that the Word became flesh in order to lead the faithful ‘to see not only the glory of his glorified humanity, but also the unchangeable essence of his divine majesty in which he lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit’.⁷⁸ Augustine argued that by revealing the divinity of the Word and relating in his gospel those discourses of Christ which ‘introduce us to the knowledge of the unity of the Trinity and the blessedness of the life eternal’, John was commending the contemplative life to us.⁷⁹ John himself had been borne aloft into the light of the Word, ‘where it is possible to behold the equality and

⁷⁵ Jerome, *Epistulae*, 18A, CSEL 44: 82, 84–85.

⁷⁶ Bede, *Exp. Apocalypseos* (as in note 36), 285.

⁷⁷ É. Ó Carragáin, “The City of Rome and the World of Bede”, Jarrow Lecture (Jarrow, 1994), 4–5.

⁷⁸ *Hom.*, 1.8: 59, trans. CS 110 (as in note 16), 83.

⁷⁹ *De consensu*, 1.5, 8, Migne PL 34, 1046, trans. NPNF 6 (as in note 5), 80.

immutability of the Trinity'. Alluding to the heavenward flight of John's eagle, Augustine warns, however, that in this present life few will even briefly reach beyond the cloud of carnal darkness with which the whole earth is covered. He urges the continuing necessity of the active life of virtue, penitence and estrangement from worldly preoccupation for all the faithful, so that those who seek further spiritual understanding, 'borne out of the atmosphere of earth on wings of a twofold love, as on a pair of strong pinions, may be enlightened by Christ who is also the Word, who was in the beginning, the Word who was with God and who was God', although that will still be as through a glass darkly. Only when the Lord himself comes, and the faithful appear with him in glory (cf. Colossians 3:4), will he be seen face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12).⁸⁰

Roughly contemporary with the Grimbald Gospels and also from Canterbury, the Eadui Gospels shows the importance of John's Christology for Trinitarian belief by means of an unusual addition to the conventional evangelist portrait of John, which is thematically linked with other images in the Gospel Book. Early patristic commentators on the Genesis account of creation were influenced by classical cosmological concepts of number and the harmonious ordering of time, space, and matter and by Old Testament images of the Creator measuring the heavens, enclosing the deep with a compass, weighing the mountains in scales, creating according to number (1 Proverbs 8:27–29; Isaiah 40:12, 26). Augustine drew on such hexaemeral traditions in his commentary on John's gospel opening. He expounded John's declaration about the Word, 'All things were made by him, and without him nothing was made' (John 1:3), by describing the order and harmony which characterises his divine creation: 'For no form, no structure, no agreement of parts, no substance whatever that can have weight, number, measure, exists but by that Word, and by that Creator Word, to whom it is said, "You have ordered all things in measure, and in number, and in weight": *omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti* (Wisdom 1 1:21).⁸¹ The Wisdom text is quoted in descriptions of the divine Creator in the computistical manual compiled by Byrhtferth, a monk at Ramsey, c. 1001, where it is related to the cosmic quaternities in which divine order and harmony are revealed and to the undivided Trinity, ruling, and regulating all creation.⁸²

The identification of the Word described by John with the divine Creator of Genesis is pictured in the prefatory cycle of the Tiberius Psalter, c. 1050, which shows the head and hands of the cross-nimbed Creator, who holds [208] dividers and scales but is otherwise concealed behind the orb of the cosmos.⁸³ In his commentary on John, Augustine used the verse 'All things were made by him', in

80 *De consensu*, 4. 10, 20, Migne *PL* 34, 1227–30, trans. *NPNF* 6, 235.

81 *In Iohannis evangelium*, 1.13: 8, trans. *NPNF* 7 (as in note 23), 11.

82 *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. P.S. Baker and M. Lapidge, *EETS S.S.* 15: 7, 9, 196.

83 London, B.L., Cotton Tiberius C.VI, fol. 7v. Genesis frontispiece in B.L. Royal Ms. 1 E.VII, fol. 1v, Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (as in note 56), fig. 319. A. Heimann, "Three Illustrations from the Bury St Edmunds Psalter and their Prototypes: Notes on the Iconography of Some Anglo-Saxon Drawings", *JWCI* 29 (1966), 39–59: 46–47.

order to argue that the all-creating Word cannot himself have been made; Augustine thereby showed how the authority of John's gospel explicitly refuted Arians who claimed that the Word was made (*verbum factum est*), and that there must, therefore, have been a time when the Son of God did not exist.⁸⁴

In the Eadui Gospels two images excerpted from the iconography of Genesis illustration are set out in the first opening of the arcaded Canon Tables documenting the ordered harmony of the fourfold gospel (Figures 7.7 and 7.8). They show the *dextera dei* holding dividers and scales and the cross-nimbed head and raised hands of the Creator, fols. 9v–10. The implicit theology is related to the final image in the book, the portrait of St John (Figure 7.9). In this set of scribal evangelist portraits without symbols, the synoptic evangelists have codices and John alone has a prophetic scroll, which bears an unusually long excerpt from his Gospel opening: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. This was in the beginning'. The text reaches right down to the ear of the small trampled figure of Arius beneath John's foot. Arius with a gesture of speech is still vainly declaiming his own text from a scroll, but it is shown overturned and upside down: *tempus quando non erat* ('there was a time when he was not'). Those who subscribed to this belief had been anathematised in the Nicæan Trinitarian profession of faith.⁸⁵ The appearance of Arius in late Anglo-Saxon art reflects his archetypal role as an image of heresy, his refutation an aid to explaining Trinitarian belief. Drawing on Augustine, Ælfric expounded the Trinity and described the heresy of Arius in his vernacular homily on the Nicene Creed.⁸⁶ Arius served as a recognizable sign of the continuing [209] need for the faithful to believe, if not fully understand, the mystery of St John's revelation of the true identity of Christ and the nature of the Trinity.

John the Evangelist was revered in the art of the Benedictine monastic reform for his divinely inspired spiritual and theological insight and because, as the beloved of Christ, he was a model of the contemplative life, which was particularly identified with the monastic life. Scriptural interpretative traditions continued to be important, but developments in contemporary spirituality and new ways of engaging the viewer or donor are evident in depictions of John outside the context of the evangelist portrait.

The early Insular Crucifixion iconography of the long-robed upright figure of Christ with open eyes, and flanked by cherubim and the spear-bearer and sponge-bearer, was almost entirely replaced in late Anglo-Saxon art by the depiction of Christ with a loincloth and naked torso and by the devotional tableau of Mary and John at the foot of the cross, as in Continental art.⁸⁷ The presence of Christ's

84 *In Iohannis evangelium* 1.11: 6, trans. *NPNF* 7 (as in note 23), 10.

85 *Eos autem qui dicunt: erat quando non erat, et priusquam nasceretur non erat [. . .] hos anathematizat catholica et apostolica ecclesia*, Tanner, *Decrees* (as in note 6), 1.5.

86 Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. B. Thorpe (London, 1844), 1. 275–95: 291.

87 B. Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography and the Art of the Monastic Revival* (Cambridge 1990), 95–110.



Figure 7.8 The Eadui Gospels. Canon Tables. Hanover, Museum August Kestner. WM XXIIa 36, fol. 10.

the individual soul. Appropriately, the tinted drawing which forms the Ramsey Psalter's frontispiece offers an intimate meditation on the crucified Christ through the responses of Mary and John (Figure 1.9).⁸⁹ Christ's head is bowed under the mocking title-board of the cross, his body gently sags, blood flows from all five wounds. The mourning figure of his mother prompts the viewer's compassionate response to a moving image of the humanity and death of Christ. But this is qualified by the scale of the body of Christ and the Cross, which span the universe described by the frame. Moreover, Mary's downcast eyes contrast with the eager upward gaze of John. His upflung left hand, mirroring that of Christ, draws the viewer's eye to the scroll on which he is writing.

In his unique account of the piercing of Christ's side [210] after his death John asserts, 'He who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true, and he knows

⁸⁹ London, B.L., Harley Ms. 2904, Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (as in note 56), cat. 41, figs. 141, 142.



Figure 7.9 St John portrait. Hanover, Museum August Kestner. WM XX1a 36, fol. 147v.

that he tells the truth – that you also may believe’ (John 19:35). But what he is writing in the Crucifixion scene, *Hic est discipulis qui testimonium perhibet*, is from an echo of that verse later in the gospel, which goes on to refer to John’s written testimony, ‘This is the disciple who bears witness to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true’; it occurs in the context of Christ’s Resurrection appearances to Peter and John (John 21: 24). The Psalter frontispiece thus presents the dead Christ from the perspective of the Resurrection. The adaptation of John’s standing writing pose from that of a seated figure recalls the more familiar context of the evangelist at his gospel opening. John’s interpretation of the signs of death he physically saw at the Crucifixion (John 19: 34–37) accords with his spiritual insight into the divinity of the incarnate Word expressed in the Prologue. The evangelist is both an eye-witness and a visionary, a human participant in the event depicted and its divinely inspired interpreter.

The invitation to share John’s insight is conveyed by different means in the drawing of the Crucifixion that appears in the small personal prayerbook of Ælfwine, dean of the New Minster, Winchester, who became abbot c. 1032/35

(Figure 7.10).⁹⁰ The pose of Christ at first seems similar to that in the Ramsey Psalter Crucifixion, but here he is alive and wears a fillet on his brow, the side wound administered after his death is not shown, and his divinity and cosmic sovereignty are acclaimed by the classical personifications of the sun and moon that flank the cross. His humanity is suggested by the deep inclination of his head towards his mother and their close exchange of gaze, though Mary is shown as an orant figure rather than with a gesture of mourning; she is an intercessor by virtue of her motherhood of Christ. John looks more sharply upwards, beyond the *titulus* of the cross and its literal meaning, identifying Jesus of Nazareth simply as ‘the king of the Jews’, to the *dextera dei* that emerges from heaven, accepting the oblation. John’s standing pose is not derived from that of a seated evangelist portrait and what he is writing is not visible, but his pen suggests more than an attribute. His gospel witness is crucial to an understanding of the ekphrastic inscription that is arranged either side of the *titulus* of the cross. It does not describe the picture but enlarges its revelation of the identity of the Crucified; it also speaks directly to the viewer by naming him:

*Hec crux consignet Ælfwinum corpore mente
In qua suspendens tra(hit) d(eus) omnia secum.*

The first line conveys the idea of Ælfwine being signed or sealed (as in baptism) by this cross, body, and mind. The second line alludes to Christ’s own words in John 12:32, in which he signified what manner of death he would die and its universal import, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all to me’ (*Et ego si exaltatus a [211] terra, omnia traham ad me ipsum*).⁹¹ The inscription makes significant changes to these often cited words, including the substitution of *suspendens* for *exaltatus* and the shift from first to third person, to present the paradox in even more startling terms: ‘[This cross] hanging on which God draws all to himself’. Though the drawing indicates Christ’s humanity as well as his divinity, unlike the Ramsey Psalter it does not portray his suffering and death. The inscription therefore jolts the viewer into realising more fully the implications of the unity of the two natures in Christ’s person and hence the significance of the Crucifixion for human redemption.

Ælfwine’s book is dense with prayers that draw on traditions of private devotion arising out of the practice of the meditative reading and praying of the psalms and their accretion of responses, antiphons, and hymns in the monastic office. In particular, the immediate setting of the Crucifixion drawing, as well as the office of the

90 London, B.L., Cotton Ms., Titus D.xxvii, Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (as in note 56), cat. 77, figs. 245, 246.

91 For the themes of *exaltatus* and of God drawing all to himself, see also John 3: 14–15; 6: 44. Augustine’s commentary stresses “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself”, (2 Corinthians 5:19) and cites Cant 1:3: *In Iohannis evangelium*: 262, 450, trans. *NPNF* 7 (as in note 23), 169–71, 290.



Figure 7.10 *Alfwine's Prayerbook*, Crucifixion. © The British Library Board. MS Cotton Titus D. XXVII, fol. 65v.

holy Cross that appears later at fols. 80–81v, are part of a long tradition of the veneration of the Cross, also reflected in the Good Friday *adoratio crucis* and the prayers that follow it in the *Regularis Concordia*.⁹² The Crucifixion scene on fol. 65v is preceded by the account of the Passion from John's gospel and a fervent prayer for protection which is addressed in the first person to the Cross (fols. 57r–64v) and is answered in the first line of the inscription. The drawing prefaces devotions to the Cross (fols. 66r–73v), opening with groups of psalms and prayers addressed to parts of the body of Christ – his hands, feet, mouth, breast and ears – which a rubric says are to be said before an image of the Cross.⁹³ The second line of the inscription above the cross accords with themes and phrases in the liturgical prayers

⁹² *Regularis Concordia*, ed. T. Symons (London 1953), 45: 43, 44.

⁹³ *Si vis orare ante crucifixum hos psalmos canta*. B. Günzel, ed., *Alfwine's Prayerbook: London, British Library, Cotton Titus D xxvi and xxvii*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 108 (London, 1993), 123–28.

on fol. 67v; they hail the cross on which the redeemer of Israel hung (*quia super te pependit redemptor Israel*) and they address Christ, who, extending his hands on the cross, drew all things to himself (*qui expansis in cruce manibus, traxisti omnia ad te secula*). The prayer, *Domine misere nobis*, is paired with a verse from Phillipians 2:8–11, describing the humility and obedience of the incarnate Christ at his passion and death (*Christus Dominus factus est obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis*). The Philippians text is here repeated and directly followed by the antiphon used in the Good Friday ceremonies, acclaiming Christ through the image of the exalted Cross, ‘on which the salvation of the world was hung’ (*Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit, uenite adoremus*).⁹⁴ These texts were familiar from Holy Week and the feasts for the Invention and Exaltation of the Cross, where the Philippians hymn is paired with Christ’s words in John’s gospel, ‘I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to me’ (John 12: 32).

The drawing of the Crucifixion is complemented by the arcane image that follows the prayers of the Cross and acts as a preface to the office of the Trinity (Figure 7.11).⁹⁵ Johannine theology is central to both images. It is well-known that elements of the composite drawing on fol. 75v are derived from the Carolingian Utrecht Psalter’s illustrations to the Credo and Gloria and to Psalm 109 (110): 1–2, in which the psalmist David enigmatically says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand and I will make your enemies your footstool’.⁹⁶ There are features in the Anglo-Saxon drawing, however, which do not appear in the Utrecht drawings but are present in exegesis of this psalm text and were possibly to be found in late antique visual images. The psalm text is frequently quoted in the New Testament. The synoptic gospels present Jesus’s challenge to the Jews to understand the spiritual meaning of this psalm text: if the Messiah they expected was simply the son of David, why did the psalmist David, speaking in the spirit, refer to him as Lord (Matthew 22:41–6)? The psalm text was interpreted by Peter to refer to the crucified and risen [212] Jesus, exalted by the right hand of God, as both Christ (Messiah) and Lord (Acts 2: 33–36).⁹⁷

Arians read the psalm as evidence that the Father must have been greater than the Son he asked to sit at his right hand; they argued that Christ could not, therefore, be in hypostatic union with the Father. Augustine and other defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity refuted these literalist readings of Scripture by asserting the fullness of Christ’s divinity through quoting the opening of John’s gospel

94 *Regularis Concordia* (as in note 92), 37, 44: 36, 42.

95 O’Reilly, “St John” (as in note 88), 174–83; B. Raw, “What Do We Mean by the Source of a Picture?” in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. C. Hicks (Stamford, 1992), 286–97.

96 *Utrecht Psalter* (as in note 64), 252, col. fig. 36a and figs. 36b–d for the three Utrecht Psalter illustrations, none of which shows Judas or Arius.

97 Other citations of the Psalm include 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13, 10:13.



Figure 7.11 Ælfwine's Prayerbook, Trinity. © The British Library Board. MS Cotton Titus D. XXVII, fol. 75v.

Prologue, 'In the beginning was the Word'. Bede linked Judas the betrayer and Arius the heresiarch: the one tried to destroy Christ's humanity, the other his divinity.⁹⁸ In the context of the Ælfwine drawing the named figures of Judas and Arius may serve as representing two different ways of misunderstanding Scripture and the true identity of Christ. They are depicted in chains beneath the devil, the defeated enemy who forms the footstool of the Lord (the Son) as he is being enthroned on the right hand of the Lord (the Father). Christ's feet on this footstool are positioned similarly to his feet on the suppedaneum of the cross in the inscribed scene of the Crucifixion, where the enemy is being invisibly overcome, according to Christ's prophecy of his exaltation: 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all unto me' (John 12: 31–32).

⁹⁸ *The Venerable Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. L.T. Martin (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1989), 18; *Hom. 1.23*: 169, trans. CS 110 (as in note 16), 232–33.

In showing that the Son is consubstantial and co-equal with the Father, the drawing on fol. 75v departs from the Utrecht Psalter illustration of Psalm 109 to depict the two enthroned Lords as identical figures with mutual gaze; they are cross-nimbed, their haloes overlapping. Though Christ suffered and died in his humanity, not in his divinity, his human and divine natures were so united in his person at the incarnation it was possible to say that God was crucified, as does the inscription over the Crucifixion image on fol. 65v of Ælfwine's prayerbook: '[This cross] hanging on which God draws all things to himself'. The relationship of the two enthroned Lords on fol. 75v is further articulated through the figure of the Virgin, who is crowned and stands on Christ's right hand in heaven. The nimbed dove overshadowing the Virgin alludes to Mary's virginal conception of Christ by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1: 18; Luke 1: 35) and testifies to the divinity of the Word made flesh, the only-begotten of the Father (John 1: 14). The cross-nimbed child held in the arms of his mother, from whom he received his humanity and his human ancestry, is both son of David (Matthew 1: 1) and David's Lord, the Son of God (John 1: 14).⁹⁹

Cassiodorus had likened Psalm 109 to the beauty of the opening of John's gospel; the psalmist too was 'borne upwards into the hidden heights of loftiest contemplation'. He shows how John's gospel and Psalm 109 help the faithful to understand what is said in the Creed. It was fundamental to human salvation that 'in the womb of Mary ever virgin the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us' (John 1: 14), because it was in that humanity which he took on, uniting him to us and renewing [213] his image in us, that Christ suffered, died to sin and was buried. Furthermore, he ascended into heaven in the glorified flesh in which he rose from the dead and 'sits on the right hand of the Father', meaning that 'he remains with his two united and perfect natures in the glory of the Father for ever'.¹⁰⁰

The drawings of Christ's crucifixion and enthronement on fols. 65v and 75v in Ælfwine's book are thematically related by John's Christology. In the inscribed image of the Crucifixion God incarnate does not lay aside his divinity but the glory due to his divinity and hangs upon the cross to overcome death; the second image shows that his humanity, thus exalted, shares in the glory of his eternal divinity. Mary is important in both images, seen at Christ's right hand on earth and in heaven. Christ received from her his human nature which in his person was in perfect union with his divine nature; she is, therefore, the mother of God.

Contemporary devotion to the Virgin is evident in the inclusion of the office *in honore sanctae Mariae*, in addition to the offices of the Trinity and the holy Cross, in Ælfwine's prayerbook.¹⁰¹ The drawing of the enthronement of Christ prefaces

99 Augustine, *En. in psalmos*, CCSL 38: 541–42.

100 Cassiodorus, *Exp. psalmorum*, CCSL 98: 1013, trans. ACW 53 (as in note 33), 116, 124.

101 M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990), 90–121.

the office of the Trinity, whose collection of liturgical texts, psalms, prayers, hymns and collects includes on fol. 79 a fervent prayer which illustrates some of the preoccupations of contemporary spirituality. The suppliant, conscious of sin, beseeches God:

Perfect the work of your mercy begun in me and, by the power of the holy Cross and the intercession of the blessed mother of God (*genetrix dei*) and ever virgin Mary, and of all your saints, give me always to think, speak, act, desire and do the things that are pleasing to you and, protecting me, [. . .] make me, though wretched and unworthy, eventually to attain your mercy and come to the vision of you, to behold you.¹⁰²

The contents of Ælfwine's book, produced before 1035 and possibly in the 1020s, illustrate the richness and diversity of traditions which fed the private devotions and theological interests of its clerical patron, but also served members of the laity, whose piety was modelled on the spirituality of the monastic reform. Over the previous two centuries ardent prayers to the Holy Cross, to Christ, to Mary and John and other saints, were among those added to Psalters or compiled in separate *libelli*. These traditions provided the essential context for the celebrated quickening of sensibility and affective spirituality in personal devotion in eleventh-century northwestern Christendom, expressed in a variety of ways, including the prayers of St Anselm from the 1070s, which were to be disseminated amongst members of his circle, including royal and aristocratic women.¹⁰³ A generation after Ælfwine's little prayerbook the tableau of Mary and John at the foot of the Cross was very differently expressed in a splendid Gospel Book produced for a noble lay woman, c. 1060–65.

Pierpont Morgan Library MS. M. 709 is one of four surviving deluxe Anglo-Saxon Gospel Books made for Judith, daughter of Baldwin IV, count of Flanders, and wife of Tostig Godwineson, earl of Northumbria.¹⁰⁴ In the light of contemporary devotion to Mary and to the humanity and passion of Christ, Jane Rosenthal has reappraised the figure of Mary in the Gospel's Crucifixion frontispiece, fol. 1v (Figure 7.12). She interprets Mary's close interaction with the figure of Christ and with the *manus dei* above as expressing her 'crucial role as co-author of salvation' and draws attention to the fact that the small donor figure of Judith of Flanders is dressed similarly to Mary as a great lady but humbly embraces the cross, imitating

102 Latin text in Günzel, *Ælfwine's Prayerbook* (as in note 93), 131.

103 B. Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm* (Harmondsworth, 1973), 27–86; T.H. Bestul, "St Anselm and the Continuity of Anglo-Saxon Devotional Traditions", *Annuaire mediævale* 18 (1977) 20–41; R. Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York, 2002), 142–92.

104 New York, Pierpont Morgan Lib., 709, fol. 1v. P. McGurk and J. Rosenthal, "The Anglo-Saxon Gospel books of Judith, Countess of Flanders: Their Text, Make-up, and Function", *ASE* 24 (1995) 251–308: 251–56.



Figure 7.12 The Gospels of Judith of Flanders. Crucifixion frontispiece. The Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.709, fol. 1v. The Morgan Library & Museum. Purchased by J.P. Morgan (1867–1943) in 1926.

Mary in her tender love for Christ and seeking Mary's compassionate intercession with her son.¹⁰⁵ [214]

The very beautiful elongated figures of Christ, Mary, and John, all on the same scale, are subtly choreographed, relating to each other and the cross in swaying contrapuntal poses that direct the eye of the viewer to a series of perceptions. The two attendant figures and the suppliant slightly overlap the lower frame, edging the scene into the viewer's space. The kneeling donor figure looks up, not at Mary or Christ, but at John. How, then, might the role of John in this composition be understood?

The image of Mary and John standing by the Cross has the authority of the fourth gospel which describes Christ entrusting his mother to the disciple whom

105 J. Rosenthal, "An Unprecedented Image of Love and Devotion: The Crucifixion in Judith of Flanders's Gospel Book", in *Tributes to Lucy Freeman Sandler: Studies in Illuminated Manuscripts*, ed. K.A. Smith and C.H. Krinsky (Turnhout/London, 2007), 21–36: 25–29.

he loved (John 19: 26, 27). Christ's words to his mother, *ecce filius tuus*, and to his beloved disciple, *ecce mater tua*, established John as Mary's adoptive son, drawing him still closer to Christ. Patristic commentators had seen Mary and John as figures of the Church and the individual soul. Ambrose urged the faithful soul to imitate John in his closeness to Christ and in his recognition of the Crucifixion as a triumph: 'May Christ say to you from the gibbet of the Cross, "Behold your mother" and may he say to the Church, "Behold your son"; then, truly, you will begin to be a son of the Church when you see Christ victorious on the cross'.¹⁰⁶ Looking at the Cross with John's spiritual insight is already presented by Ambrose, as by Augustine, as transformative.

Bede commented that Christ loved John beyond the other disciples as 'one whom the special prerogative of chastity had made worthy of fuller love'; Christ granted 'the more desirable sweetness of his own love to one who had withdrawn from fleshly pleasures'. Accordingly, when Christ was about to die on the Cross, 'he commended his mother to John, so that virgin might watch over virgin'.¹⁰⁷ Aldhelm in *De virginitate* described Christ, a virgin, commending a virgin to a virgin: *virginem virgo virgini commendabat*.¹⁰⁸ The commendation of Mary to John is recalled in Ælfwine's prayerbook and in the first of Ælfric's homilies on the Assumption.¹⁰⁹ St Anselm's penitential prayers to St John the Evangelist eagerly seek his intercession specifically because he is most beloved by God and because of his pre-eminent love of God; John 'reclined familiarly on the glorious breast of the Most High; God gave you to his mother as her son in place of himself' (John 19: 26, 27).¹¹⁰ Anselm and those who used his prayers, conscious of their own unworthiness, were to beseech John to intercede for God's mercy but also to look upon them and see their desire and longing for a share in his love of God and in the love granted to him by God. In Judith of Flanders's picture Mary and John are shown as youthful complementary figures with similar facial features and gaze; both are heavenly patrons, virgin intercessors, exemplars of the response of the faithful to Christ.

As in no other Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion image, Christ's head is deeply bowed, his body white and in serpentine pose, his arms hang well below the horizontal beam of the cross, his hands are closing over the nails, and his feet are nailed directly to the roughly hewn cross. Though the depiction of Christ's body may anticipate later medieval affective representations, however, in this image it does not primarily elicit earthbound participation in Christ's human suffering. Mary and John are not in attitudes of mourning. The cross, moreover, spans earth and heaven, stretching up from the penitent at its base to the hand of God emerging

106 Ambrose, *In Luc*, CCSL 14: 216, noted by Raw, *Crucifixion Iconography* (as in note 87), 100 and n. 45.

107 *Hom.* 1.9: 62, *Hom.* 1.14: 97, trans. CS 110 (as in note 16), 87, 137.

108 Aldhelm, *Prose Works* (as in note 14), 64.

109 Clayton, *Virgin Mary* (as in note 101), 112, 236.

110 Ward, *Prayers and Meditations* (as in note 103), 157.

from the clouds. Above the tau cross, the veiled cosmological symbols of sun and moon do not simply recall the darkness over the whole earth at the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:45); in awe they recognise their divine Creator in the figure of the Crucified and veil their faces from his presence, as at his Second Coming (Matthew 24:29).¹¹¹

Of the five surviving Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion images that use the iconography of the hewn cross, this one most eloquently suggests, as does the *Dream of the Rood*, that the dead wood of the man-made gibbet may be seen with the inner eye of the faithful as the Tree of Life.¹¹² The exaltation of Christ is symbolically enacted in the Good Friday *adoratio crucis* ceremony when a cross is unveiled [216] and raised up by deacons, acclaimed with the antiphon, 'Behold the wood of the cross on which the world's salvation hung', and humbly revered by the faithful. The *Regularis Concordia* here adds prayers in honour of the Cross and the crucified Christ, in which the penitent seeks forgiveness and mercy: 'Hear me prostrate before thy adorable and most glorious Cross that I may deserve to stand before thee, pure and pleasing in thy sight'.¹¹³ Amalarius of Metz had expounded the *adoratio crucis* ceremony in his well-known liturgical commentary. He cited Jerome's spiritual counsel to adore the wood of the Cross, like the high-born Roman lady Paula who often sought its protection and prostrated herself before it in penitence. Amalarius presents such prostration as a response to Christ's example: 'He humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God has exalted him' (Philippeans 2:8-9).¹¹⁴ Penitential prostration before the cross is a plea for protection and mercy, but also a ritual enactment of sharing in Christ's humble descent in order to share in his exaltation, as represented in Carolingian images of rulers in *proskynesis* before a crucifix or symbolic depiction of the Crucifixion.¹¹⁵

Such traditions help explain the pose of the suppliant figure in Judith of Flanders's Gospel frontispiece but not immediately her particular connection with the figure of St John. His standing posture, with one knee higher than the other, one foot seen frontally and one in profile, derives from that of a seated evangelist portrait, but adapted so that he is pictured stepping up on a rocky mound. This prominent detail, also seen in the Winchcombe Psalter's version of Mary and John writing beside the *lignum vitae*, has been discussed elsewhere with reference to a metaphor extensively used of John by Augustine in the opening tractates of his commentary on John's gospel.¹¹⁶

111 Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies* (as in note 86), 1.109, 2.257; *Regularis Concordia* (as in note 92), 36-37.

112 J. O'Reilly, "The Rough-Hewn Cross in Anglo-Saxon Art", in *Ireland and Insular Art, A.D. 500-1200*, ed. M. Ryan (Dublin 1987), 153-57.

113 *Regularis Concordia*, 44; L. Gjerlow, *Adoratio Crucis* (Oslo, 1961), 13-28.

114 J.M. Hanssens, ed., *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia*, 3 vols., (Vatican, 1948), 2:101.

115 *Regularis Concordia*, 45: 43-44. R. Deshman, "The Exalted Servant: The Ruler Theology of the Prayer Book of Charles the Bald", *Viator* 11 (1980), 385-433: 386-95, figs. 1, 5.

116 O'Reilly, "St John" (as in note 88), 170-71.

Augustine explains that ‘the natural man’ understands according to the flesh and that most cannot perceive things of the Spirit unaided; St John is one of the greater souls, like the mountains which receive peace for the people (Psalms 72:3), who are illumined by divine Wisdom and transmit to others whatever they are capable of receiving. Augustine emphasises that John is like a mountain because divine Wisdom not only came down to him but he rose up to it; in his mystical ascent he rose above all things created by the Word to reach him by whom all things were made and contemplated his divinity: ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God’. Augustine therefore urges those who would rise above a carnal to a spiritual understanding to lift up their eyes to the mountain for help (cf. Psalms 121:1, 2): ‘that is, raise yourselves up to the Evangelist, rise to his meaning’. He exhorts his readers to lift up their eyes to the Gospel and to the evangelist, who received his spiritual understanding directly from the Lord on whose bosom he lay. Like John they are inwardly to raise purified hearts to the Lord himself: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God’ (Matthew 5:8).¹¹⁷ Augustine repeats his description of those who are like mountains illumined by divine light, as John was in the first verse of his gospel. Those who have seen or spiritually understood this, ‘in order to arrive at that which they saw from afar, did not depart from the Cross of Christ’. Augustine reassures those of weaker eyesight that they too will be carried to their heavenly home if they embrace the Cross and do not depart from the Cross and Christ’s humility.¹¹⁸

In Judith’s frontispiece, the kneeling figure clasps the Cross with both hands, her right index finger pointing to the book which John holds and she looks up at John’s other hand with which he writes. He is stepping up on the miniature mountain to gaze on the face of Christ. The metaphor of the mountain, signifying John’s mystical ascent to see the divinity of the Word at the opening of his gospel, is here transposed to the Crucifixion and death of Christ, which John physically witnessed and whose redemptive meaning he interpreted in his [217] gospel. Judith of Flanders, meditating on the frontispiece of her Gospel Book, would see herself present at the foot of the hewn Cross, from which hangs the body of the dead Christ. The humanity he received from his mother is lovingly imagined, but Judith is also urged to rise to John’s meaning and understand the Crucifixion not only as a descent but as an exaltation. She is drawn to see through John’s eyes the divinity of the Crucified, inseparable from his humanity, and so always humbly to embrace the Cross as the means of her own heavenward ascent. [218]

117 *In Iohannis evangelium* 1.2–7: 1–4, trans. *NPNF* 7 (as in note 23), 7–9.

118 *In Iohannis evangelium* 2.2, 3:12–13, trans. *NPNF* 7, 14.

SEEING THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

Image and meaning in early Irish manuscript art

Though central to New Testament accounts of human salvation, the crucifixion does not feature either in the surviving art of the catacombs and early Christian sarcophagi or in the repertoire of fourth-century Christian art after the conversion of Constantine. The two earliest known examples in the West are from Rome, a carved ivory and a panel from the doors of Santa Sabina, c. 420–32.¹ They are roughly contemporary with Pope Celestine's sending of Palladius in 431 beyond the old imperial frontier to be the first bishop 'to the Irish who believe in Christ'.² The long delay before the first extant Irish representations of the crucifixion, as of other figural images of Christ, has been ascribed to the remoteness and perceived distinctive character of the early Irish church before the ascendancy of the *Romani* in the controversy over the dating of Easter.³ Remarkably few representations of the crucifixion, however, have survived from anywhere, East or West, before the eighth century, even in areas where representational art was deeply rooted and in works that depict other scenes from the Passion narrative.

In contrast, the symbol of the cross survives in multiple forms and media throughout the early Christian world. As the sign of salvation, it was depicted with

1 Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art*, 2 (London, 1972), figs. 323, 326; *Picturing the Bible: the earliest Christian art*, ed. Jeffrey Spier (New Haven, CT, and London, 2007), Maskell Ivories, cat. 57; also p. 227, fig. 1; cat. 55, 56; Dina Tumminello, *La crocifissione del portale di S. Sabina e le origini dell' iconologia della crocifissione* (Rome, 2003). See Felicity Harley McGowan, 'The Maskell Passion Ivories and Greco-Roman art: notes on the iconography of the crucifixion', in Juliet Mullins, Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Richard Hawtree (eds), *Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the early medieval West* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 13–33.

2 Prosper Tyro, *Contra Collatorum*, c.21; *PL*, 51:271. T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 202–14.

3 As argued by Michael W. Herren and Shirley Ann Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity: Britain and Ireland from the fifth to the tenth century* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 47–65, 234–35, 250–60, esp. p. 189. Recent work has qualified the picture of isolation: see, for example, Tomás Ó Carragáin, *Churches in early medieval Ireland* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2010), pp. 8–9, 15–47 for expressions of *romanitas* in pre-seventh-century Irish material culture.

a variety of iconographic conventions, some of which were to be adapted in [52] Insular representations of the crucifixion, as will be seen. The cross was shown with expanded terminals, for example, raised on a stand or a mound, framed by an honorific arch, encircled or displayed within a laurel wreath of victory. It was often shown with equilateral arms, emphasising the four cardinal directions, or combined with Greek letters, either the initials of the sacred name of Christ (XP) or his apocalyptic title, *alpha* and *omega*. It could be represented as a precious jewelled object or stylised tree of life, sometimes revealed between paired figures, whether men or angels, birds or animals. Such devices do not simply recall the historical crucifixion but variously suggest the triumph of the cross and its cosmic and eschatological significance.

The exalted cross could be identified with Christ himself, as is most clearly evident on small sixth-century *ampullae* that were mass-produced for pilgrims to Jerusalem. The sites of the crucifixion and resurrection were enshrined within the precincts of the Constantinian basilica, marking the finding-place of the relics of the cross; the compressed designs of the *ampullae* reflect the cult of the holy places and possibly the monumental images once displayed in the churches there.⁴ Many *ampullae* feature a cross that does not bear Christ but is flanked by the two thieves, sometimes by Mary and John as well, or by the spear-bearer and sponge-bearer. The empty tomb is enshrined below the cross, signifying the resurrection. A portrait bust of Christ appears above or at the centre of the cross, which is shown as a standard of victory or *lignum vitae*, attended by symbols of sun and moon and revered by two genuflecting human figures. Within a single image, therefore, the cross could symbolically represent the crucifixion and acclaim Christ, risen, ascended and glorified.⁵

What is different about depicting Christ on the cross is that it focuses attention on his identity; it necessarily conveys some view about his humanity and divinity and about the reality and significance of his suffering and death. The theological issues had long been debated and were influentially articulated in the *Tome* of Leo the Great, which he emphasised was but an exposition of the Scriptures and the faith handed on by the apostles, safe-guarded by the fathers of the church and confessed in the creed by all the faithful throughout the world, if with differing degrees of understanding. The *Tome* was endorsed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 and both were affirmed by the Lateran Council of 649 and the Council of Constantinople (III) in 680–81. Leo and the theology of Chalcedon were

4 For the influence of the veneration of the cross in the holy places on its liturgical commemoration in the West, see Louis Van Tongeren, 'Imagining the Cross on Good Friday: rubric, ritual and relic in early medieval Roman, Gallican and Hispanic liturgical traditions', in Juliet Mullins, Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Richard Hawtree (eds), *Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the early medieval West* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 34–51.

5 André Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte (Monza-Bobbio)* (Paris, 1958); Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art*, 2, fig. 324.

repeatedly invoked in the early medieval West as a measure of right belief.⁶ [53] Doctrinal orthodoxy was asserted by Columbanus and Cummian alike, notwithstanding their use of differing Easter tables; Bede defended the teaching of Aidan on the identity of Christ and the means of redemption.⁷ Arguably, the language of the debate may also be discerned in the unique inscription above the first extant Insular illumination of the crucifixion, in the Durham Gospels of the late seventh or early eighth century (Plate 1.1).⁸

The theological tradition of early Latin Christendom is an important larger context in which to view the regional distinctiveness of the iconography and style of Insular manuscript images of the crucifixion, in order to understand something of the meaning and purpose they might have carried for contemporaries.⁹

‘The son of god was crucified’: the theology of the cross

Leo explained that humankind had been created in the divine image and likeness (Genesis 1:26, 27), but had been deceived into sin and death by the devil. The restoration of fallen humanity was effected when the Word, the Son of God, himself took on human weakness and mortality; through the power of his divinity, his incarnate body was raised from death and glorified, thereby transforming humanity: ‘overcoming the author of sin and death would be beyond us, had not he whom sin could not defile, nor death hold down, taken up our nature and made it his own’ (see Hebrews 2:14). In the divinity that he shared with the Father, Christ was sinless. In his humanity, he ‘was like us in all respects except for sin’

6 Insular familiarity with the issues is increasingly being recognised. Bede, for example, had access to the *acta* of the Lateran Council of 649, which had been brought from Rome and copied at Wearmouth at the time of the Hatfield Council, 679, where ‘the bishops of the island of Britain’ affirmed Chalcedon and the other ecumenical councils and the Lateran Council, in preparation for the Council of Constantinople in 680–81: *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5:17–18, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical history of the English people*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), pp. 384–91. For discussion of Northumbrian contacts with Rome and responses to Christological developments there, see Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the rood: liturgical images and the Old English poems of the Dream of the Rood tradition* (London and Toronto, 2005), pp. 223–79.

7 Jennifer O’Reilly, ‘The image of orthodoxy, the *mysterium Christi* and Insular gospel books’, *L’Irlanda e gli irlandesi nell’alto medioevo: Settimane di studio della fondazione centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo*, 57 (2010), pp. 651–705 at 654–55, 678–82.

8 David Ganz, ‘Roman manuscripts in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England’, *Roma fra oriente e occidente: Settimane di studio della fondazione centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo*, 49 (2002), 604–47 at 612–20; Jennifer O’Reilly, ‘“Know who and what he is”: the context and inscriptions of the Durham Gospels crucifixion image’ in Rachel Moss (ed.), *Making and meaning in Insular art* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 301–16.

9 The manuscripts to be discussed are the Durham Gospels, the St Gall Gospels, the Southampton Psalter, the Book of Kells and a Continental copy of the Pauline Epistles: Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek Cod. M.p.th. fol. 69.

(Hebrews 4:15) because, through his virgin mother, he took on human nature at the Incarnation as it had been first created, without the stain of inherited sin.¹⁰ The [54] Lateran Council of 649 clarified the point by explaining that because in his humanity Christ was born incorrupt and without sin, his human will was not in conflict with his divine will but in perfect union in willing and bringing about human redemption. Though co-equal with the Father in his divinity, he was therefore humbly obedient to the Father, even to the death of the cross (see Philippians 2:8).¹¹ The explanation of the role of Christ's death in effecting human salvation was therefore related not only to belief in his divinity and humanity, but to a particular understanding of the relationship of his two natures.

Leo emphasised that at the Incarnation the two natures were maintained, complete and unconfused, but in inseparable communion in a single person, who alone could restore the relationship between God and humankind:

To pay off the debt of our state, invulnerable nature was united to a nature that could suffer, so that in a way that corresponded to the remedies we needed, 'one and the same Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Timothy 2:5) could both on the one hand die and on the other be incapable of death.¹²

On the cross, Christ's humanity was manifested in his suffering and death; in his divinity he could not suffer but, because his human nature was inseparably united with his divine nature in one person at the Incarnation, it was possible to say, as in the creed, that the only begotten Son of God was crucified.¹³ The point was summarised in Isidore's *Etymologiae*, a work known to seventh-century Irish writers: 'only the man endured the cross, but because of the unity of person, the God is also said to have endured it [. . .] Therefore we speak of the Son of God as crucified, not in the power of his divinity, but in the weakness of his humanity'.¹⁴

10 *Non enim superare possemus peccati et mortis auctorem, nisi naturam nostram ille susciperet et suam faceret quem nec peccatum contaminare nec mors potuit detinere*: Leo, *Tome (Epistula, 28)*, in *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, ed. and trans. Norman P. Tanner (2 vols, London and Washington, DC, 1990), i, pp. 77–82 at p. 77.

11 See M. Hurley, "'Born incorruptibly": the third canon of the Lateran Council, 649', *Heythrop Journal*, 2 (1961), 216–36; *Concilium lateranense a.649 celebratum*, ed. R. Riedinger (Berlin, 1984), pp. 370–1.

12 *Et ad resolvendum conditionis nostrae debitum natura inviolabilis naturae est unita passibili, ut quod nostris remediis congruebat, unus atque idem 'mediator dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus' et mori posset ex uno et mori non posset ex altero*: *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, i, p. 78.

13 *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, i, p. 80.

14 *Solus igitur homo pertulit crucem, sed propter unitatem personae et Deus dicitur pertulisse. Filium ergo Dei crucifixum fatemur, non ex virtute divinitatis, sed ex infirmitate humanitatis*: Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 7:2:48–49, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911); *The etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge, 2006), p. 157.

Though not prescribing any particular iconography for the representation of the crucifixion, Leo rhetorically visualised the scene for one who had failed, through spiritual blindness, to recognise Christ's full humanity: 'Let him see what nature it was that hung, pierced with nails, on the wood of the Cross. With the side of the Crucified laid open by the soldier's spear, let him identify the source from which the blood and water flowed, to bathe the Church of God with font [55] and cup'.¹⁵ In scripture and patristic literature, physical sight and imaginative envisioning are used as figures of spiritual insight that may lead to a deeper understanding of what is beyond all images.¹⁶ The Fathers exhort the reader to open their eyes when reading God's word (Psalms 118:18), to see with unveiled face (2 Corinthians 3:6–18), with inner sight (*interiore acie*), with the eyes of the mind or the heart, *illuminatos oculos cordis vestri* (Ephesians 1:18), and they repeatedly warn that only the pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8). There is some broad analogy in the conventions by which early medieval artists engaged the viewer to look with faith on a representation of the crucified Christ and 'see' who he really is.

The evangelisation of the Insular peoples involved the transmission not only of the Latin scriptures but of patristic traditions of biblical interpretation. The practice of elucidating the underlying spiritual meaning of a particular text in the light of other scriptural texts was made familiar at various levels of understanding through commentaries and devotional literature, homilies, hagiography and hymns, and especially in the monastic hours and the liturgy. The crucifixion images of Insular origin or influence to be discussed here appear in manuscripts of biblical and liturgical Latin texts. Though viewing the images was related to the practice of *lectio divina*, the spiritual insights they offered were mediated through a distinctive visual experience.

Peter Brown has identified the late sixth-century appearance of the codified *pictura*, opening a window on another and invisible world, as expressing a shift in Christian imagination and sensibility and marking a departure from the more accessible and realistic art of Late Antiquity.¹⁷ Figural images and Christian iconography were part of what Irish artists inherited from the diverse artistic traditions of Late Antiquity and the contemporary Christian world, but that inheritance

15 *Videat quae natura transfixa clavis pependerit in crucis ligno et aperto per militis lanceam latere crucifixi intellegat unde sanguis et aqua fluxerit, ut ecclesia dei et lavacro rigaretur et poculo: Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, i, p. 81.

16 See Herbert L. Kessler's collection of papers, *Spiritual seeing: picturing God's invisibility in medieval art* (Philadelphia, 2000).

17 Peter Brown, 'Images as a substitute for writing' in Evangelos Chrysos and Ian Wood (eds), *East and West: modes of communication* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 15–34 at pp. 32–34. Herbert Kessler's response, 'Real absence: early medieval art and the metamorphosis of vision' in *Spiritual seeing*, pp. 104–48, identifies a further watershed in the late eighth and ninth centuries, separating Western image theory (and the idea that art, being material, might only help raise the viewer towards spiritual vision by engaging the corporeal senses and mind) from 'Byzantine notions that the icon was transparent, a window onto the higher reality' (p. 124).

was selectively appropriated and transformed within a visual culture not governed by classical conventions of representation and naturalism. Figural images and Christological motifs such as the cross, the *chi* and the lozenge were adapted and assimilated in the inventive interplay of abstract forms and frames, colour and ornament, symmetry and asymmetry that characterises Insular book art.¹⁸ It was [56] an art peculiarly suited to conveying a sense of the numinous, as the earliest extant Insular illumination of the crucifixion may show.

The Durham Gospels

E.A. Lowe described the Durham Gospels as ‘written in Northumbria, in a great centre of calligraphy in the direct line of Irish tradition, or else in Ireland itself’.¹⁹ The book’s origins remain controversial. It has generally been assigned to Northumbria and its formal Insular half-uncial script most closely compared with that of the Lindisfarne Gospels, recently dated c. 710–21.²⁰ The Durham Gospels may well be earlier, however; certainly, it preserves Irish codicological traditions more fully. The essential features of its crucifixion iconography (the robed Christ flanked by two angelic figures and by the spear-bearer and sponge-bearer, with cup-shaped sponge) appear in all media in Ireland, but Richard Bailey has noted that they are not found in combination in pre-Romanesque Northumbria after this first example, which, he suggested, may reflect the earlier existence of the iconographic type in Ireland.²¹ Others have argued that the Durham Gospel Book was itself produced in Ireland.²²

The damaged crucifixion image, folio 38a verso, shares an important feature with a well-known Mediterranean iconographic type, but is not a mere derivative or reduction of that type.²³ In contrast to the earliest Roman images of the crucifixion, which show the crucified Christ as an almost naked heroic figure in a symbolic setting, early east Mediterranean images depict him in a long

18 Meyer Schapiro, *The language of forms: lectures on Insular manuscript art* (New York, 2005), pp. 99–155.

19 Durham Cathedral Library, MS A.II.17: E.A. Lowe, *Codices latini antiquiores*, II (Oxford, 1935; 2nd ed., 1972), cat. 149.

20 *The Durham Gospels*, ed. C.D. Verey, T.J. Brown and E. Coatsworth (Copenhagen, 1980); Michelle P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: society, spirituality and the scribe* (London, 2003), pp. 48–53, 252–64, 401–402.

21 R. Bailey, ‘A crucifixion plaque from Cumbria’ in John Higgitt (ed.), *Early medieval sculpture in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 8–13; Elizabeth Coatsworth, ‘The “robed Christ” in pre-Conquest sculptures of the crucifixion’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 29 (2000), 153–76.

22 Daibhí Ó Cróinín, ‘Review of the Durham Gospels facsimile commentary’, *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 352–62; W. O’Sullivan, ‘The Lindisfarne scriptorium: for and against’, *Peritia*, 8 (1994), 80–94 at 84–87.

23 Lawrence Nees, ‘On the image of Christ crucified in early medieval art’ in Michele Camillo Ferrari and Andreas Meyer (eds), *Il Volto Santo in Europa: Culto e immagini del Crocifisso nel Medioevo. Atti del Convegno internazionale di Engelberg (13–16 settembre 2000)* (Lucca, 2005), pp. 345–85.

sleeveless *colobium*, flanked by the spear-bearer and the sponge-bearer and attended by Mary and John, sometimes with the two thieves and soldiers.²⁴ With varying degrees of Greco-Roman naturalism, the crucifixion is visualised in the landscape of Golgotha, suggesting the circumstantial reality of the event. The earliest surviving representation of this crucifixion type appears, possibly interpolated or repainted, in the prefatory illuminations of the late sixth-century Syriac Rabbula Gospels.²⁵ [57] The iconography was also known in the early medieval West, for example in the wall-painting of the crucifixion in the Theodotus chapel in Santa Maria Antiqua, c. 750, in Rome, which was open to Byzantine cultural influences in the seventh and early eighth centuries.²⁶

The cross in the Durham Gospels image is not shown realistically wedged into the rocky mound on Golgotha, as in the Theodotus chapel and Eastern examples, but takes the form of the cosmological cross. The horizontal beam is unusually low and wide so that, like the vertical shaft, it extends to the frame, the four expanded terminals suggesting the four cardinal directions. Two small human figures below the cross-beam and two angelic beings above it symmetrically flank the central axis spanning earth and heaven. The upright body of Christ is almost coterminous with the cross; he is arrayed in a long-sleeved robe, with upper arms close to his sides and forearms extended in a priestly *orans* gesture.²⁷ The linear design of abstract patterned shapes on the same plane as the frame is far removed from the illusionist figural forms and spatial depth of the Rabbula Gospels.

What the Durham image does share with the Rabbula Gospels crucifixion type is the depiction of Christ as though simultaneously receiving the sponge of vinegar to his lips, immediately before his death (Matthew 27:48–50, Mark 15:36–7, John 19:28–30), and the lance to his side, even though John's Gospel, which alone describes that incident, specifies his side was wounded only after he was pronounced dead (John 19:30–4). Discussion has sometimes foundered on the question of whether the arrangement shows Christ alive or dead.

The marginal inscription above the Durham image instead enigmatically exhorts the reader: 'Know who and what he is' (*scito quis et qualis est*). The picture does not record a historical moment but presents a theological mystery through a visual paradox: Christ is shown both wounded and exalted.²⁸ While

24 On these Roman figures, see Harley McGowan, 'The Maskell Passion Ivories and Greco-Roman art', in Mullins et al., *Envisioning Christ on the Cross*, pp. 13–33.

25 Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Cod. Plut. I.56, fol. 13. *Picturing the Bible*, cat. 82, pl. 82D; *In the beginning: Bibles before the year 1000*, ed. Michelle P. Brown (Washington, DC, 2006), cat. 62.

26 Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art*, 2, figs 327, 329, 328.

27 The pose is most closely paralleled in one of the Palestinian ampullae designs (Monza, 12, 13), which shows the robed Christ standing, without the cross, as noted by Otto-Karl Werckmeister, *Irish-northumbrian book illumination of the 8th century and monastic spirituality* (Berlin, 1967), p. 58, pl. 17a.

28 For further examples of the connection between this theme and the trope of seeing and spiritual insight, Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Early medieval text and image: the wounded and exalted Christ', *Peritia*, 6–7 (1987–8), pp. 72–118.

the humanity in which he once could be seen and touched is implicit in the very representation of his incarnate body, there is no emotive or realistic evocation of his suffering and death, in contrast to some representations of the crucifixion in Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon art. In the Durham Gospels image, the sponge-bearer and spear-bearer respectively testify to that suffering and death, but the emblematic tableau they form does not diminish the magisterial authority of the crucified. On the contrary, the composition gives new life to the antique pictorial convention whereby small attendant figures help denote the high status of the large frontal figure they symmetrically flank. [58]

The account of sponge and spear in John's Gospel presents a theological insight into the voluntary and providential nature of the crucifixion. John testifies that Jesus knew that all things had now been accomplished and, in order that scripture might be completed, he said 'I thirst' (see Psalms 22:15, Psalms 69:21). The sponge of vinegar was proffered and then he gave over the spirit: *tradidit spiritum* (John 19:28–9). Augustine commented that in this passage we may discern 'the Mediator between God and man' (1 Timothy 2:5), for 'he who was manifested as man suffered these things, and he himself, who was hidden as God, foreknew and arranged them all', for the sake of human salvation. Augustine described the wound in the side of Christ's dead body as the life-giving source of the sacraments whereby the dead are raised; blood and water flowed from the wound (John 19:34) for the remission and cleansing of sins.²⁹ Early patristic descriptions of the church, born from the side of Christ on the cross as Eve was born from the side of the first Adam, and of the wound as the source of baptism and the Eucharist by which the one Church is divinely sustained, were familiar in Irish exegesis, notably Cummian's Paschal letter of c. 631, and the eighth-century compendium known as the Irish Reference Bible.³⁰

John's Gospel already presents the crucifixion as an exaltation, and the wounding of Christ's side as the fulfilment of two old Testament prophecies (John 31–7). John's first citation sees the wounded Christ prefigured in the paschal victim (Exodus 12:46), the second gnominically foretells, 'They shall look on him whom they pierced' (Zach 12:10), which the Fathers linked to the use of the same prophecy in John's apocalyptic vision of Christ coming again in glory, when 'every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him' (Revelation 1:7).

The Durham Gospels crucifixion image is not a didactic aid, teaching such material to unbelievers. It is a great icon, communicating a sense of the divine presence. The intensity of Christ's gaze draws the viewer to look with the eye of faith on 'him whom they pierced' and to respond accordingly. What the beholder

29 Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium*, CCSL, 36, *Tractatus*, 120, pp. 434–35.

30 Cummian's letter 'De controversia paschali', ed. M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (Toronto, 1988), p. 78, ll. 157–60; Ps-Jerome, *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum*, PL, 30, 587; *Tractatus Hilarii in septem epistolas canonicas*, *Scriptores Hiberniae Minores*, Pars 1, CCSL, 108B, p. 86; The 'Irish Reference Bible', Paris, BN, lat. 11561, fol. 173v: *Sicut de latere dormientis Adam facta e uxor ita ex latere xpi in cruce dormientis sacramenta ecclesiae fluxerunt*.

sees is guided by enigmatic signs, including the arrangement of spear and sponge, which does not literally illustrate the Gospel account of the crucifixion but visually expounds its significance. The process of deciphering the signs prompts recollection of what is already known from the Gospels, from related images and texts, from the liturgy, in the light of which the viewer may be brought to a fuller recognition of who Christ is. [59]

The signs include inscriptions. In the old Testament, the Almighty declares: 'I am the first and the last (*ego primus et ego novissimus*) and besides me there is no God' (Isaiah 44:6). Variants of the title are identified with Christ in the apocalyptic vision: 'I am *alpha* and *omega*, the first and the last, the beginning and the end'.³¹ Patristic commentators, followed by Isidore, Bede and the compilers of the Irish Reference Bible, used the *alpha* and *omega* as a means of expounding the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son, and Christ's eternal divinity as well as the humanity he took on in time. He is 'the first', because by him all things were made (John 1:3) and he is 'the last' because by him all things are restored (Ephesians 1:10).³² There are numerous Insular examples of the early Christian cryptogram that depicts the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega* either side of the exalted cross or the *chi-rho*.³³ In the Durham Gospels, however, the *alpha* and *omega* and the words *initium* and *et finis* (Revelation 21:6) flank the head of the crucified Christ and the *titulus* inscribed above him on the cross: *hic est ihs rex iudeorum*.

The once-iridescent wings of the two attendant heavenly beings form a mandorla around Christ's head, enclosing also the *titulus* and the *alpha* and *omega*. The winged figures evoke the two golden cherubim above the ark in the tabernacle and the temple, from between whom God spoke to his people (Exodus 25:18–22; 3 Kings 6:23–27). They may further recall the theophany of the two seraphim above the altar in the temple (Isaiah 6:3), regarded as prophetic of Christ (John 12:41).³⁴ In the context of the Durham image, the *alpha* and *omega* not only refer to the revelation of Christ's eternal divinity at the end of time but proclaim the divinity and universal sovereignty of the crucified Christ, which is concealed

31 *Ego alpha et omega primus et novissimus principium et finis* (Revelation 22:13; 21:6) and *ego sum alpha et omega principium et finis* (Revelation 1:8, 17); he is here described as 'clothed with a garment down to the feet' (Revelation 1:13).

32 Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, ed. R. Gryson, *CCSL*, 121A, p. 239, ll 33–7; p. 571, ll 39–45. E.A. Matter, 'The Apocalypse in early medieval exegesis' in R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 1992), p. 44.

33 The motif is framed at the end of Luke's Gospel in Ussher Codex I, Dublin, Trinity College MS A:4:15 (55), fol. 149v: George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: the Insular gospel-books, 650–800* (London, 1987), p. 58, fig. 22.

34 Jerome, Ep. 18A, *The letters of Jerome, Ancient Christian Writers*, 33, (Mahweh, New Jersey, 1963), p. 82. For the cherubim, Bede: *On the Tabernacle*, trans. Arthur Holder (Liverpool, 1994), pp. 16–21; Bede: *On the Temple*, trans. Seán Connolly (Liverpool, 1995), pp. 46–52. On the visual ambiguity of Insular representations, see George Henderson, 'Cherubim and seraphim in Insular literature and art' in Elizabeth Mullins and Diarmuid Scully (eds), *Listen, O isles, unto me: studies in medieval word and image* (Cork, 2011), pp. 263–77 at p. 270.

from those who see only his humanity and the literal meaning of the mocking *titulus*: 'This is Jesus the king of the Jews'. The depiction of the crucified Christ as encompassing all time and space, signified by his apocalyptic title and the cosmological nature of the cross, conveys something of the mystery that is confessed in the Creed: the Son of God was crucified.

The evangelists describe how the Roman soldiers had clothed Jesus in scarlet or purple and mockingly hailed him as 'king of the Jews', but took this robe from [60] him and clothed him in his own raiment before leading him to the place of crucifixion.³⁵ Patristic exegesis played on the royal and imperial connotations of the colour to expound its other significance as the colour of blood, and hence an image of Christ's incarnate body. Since Origen, the metaphor of Christ putting on his fleshly body like a garment, veiling his divinity, had been much used by the Fathers, including Leo the Great.³⁶ Citing Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine, Bede commented that, mystically, in the colour with which the Lord was vested by the soldiers, we may understand the flesh in which he was enrobed and offered up in his Passion, as prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 53:2). Purple represents both the blood that was poured out for us and the eternal kingdom that he entered after his Passion, enabling us to enter too.³⁷ In the Durham Gospels, the picturing of Christ enthroned on the cross, royally robed in purple edged with orpiment simulating gold, is a visual conceit simultaneously alluding to the suffering flesh of his humanity, which clothed his invisible divinity, and to the risen body of the heavenly king, whose humanity shares in the glory of his divinity.

The context of the crucifixion picture in the manuscript provides an aid to understanding how it may have been read by contemporaries. It is positioned, not in John's account of the crucifixion, but on the verso of the last page of Matthew's Gospel. The words are ornately displayed within a cruciform frame whose outer edge matches that of the crucifixion overleaf.³⁸ The framed text (Matthew 28:17–20) describes the last of Christ's resurrection appearances before he disappeared from the apostles' sight at the Ascension. The passage culminates in Christ's final command and promise to his disciples: 'Go and teach all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world' (Matthew 28:19–20).

35 Matthew 27:28–31; Mark 15:17–20; John 19:2–5. George Henderson, *Vision and image in early Christian England* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 122–35, on the colour purple.

36 Origen, *Homilies on Exodus* 9, 1, *Sources chrétiennes*, 321 (Paris, 1985), p. 280. Nicholas Constatas, 'Weaving the body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos and the Loom of the Flesh', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3:2 (1995), pp. 169–94 at 180–92; Joanne D. Sieger, 'Visual metaphor as theology: Leo the Great's sermons on the Incarnation and the arch mosaics at S. Maria Maggiore', *Gesta*, 26 (1987), pp. 83–91.

37 Bede, *In Lucam* VI and *In Marcum* IV, *CCSL*, 122, pp. 396, 627–8.

38 Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, fig. 70, pp. 58, 80–84; R. Stevick, 'The Echternach Gospels' evangelist-symbol pages: forms from "The True Measure of Geometry"', *Peritia*, 5 (1986), pp. 284–308 at 299.

All or part of the text is highlighted in some other Insular gospel books. Christ's command that all peoples be baptised, *in nomine patris, et filii, et spiritus sancti*, uses a Trinitarian baptismal formula that is unique in the New Testament. The verse's doctrinal importance appears in early Christological exegesis and was elaborated by Columbanus, Isidore and Bede.³⁹ The rite of baptism described in the Gelasian sacramentary, the Bobbio Missal and the Irish Stowe Missal invokes [61] the typological image of the water from Christ's wounded side (John 19:34) and the blessing over the font quotes the baptismal formula of Christ's command to his disciples (Matthew 28:19).⁴⁰

The Durham image of the crucified Christ with wounded side, set in a liturgical Gospel book and associated with the framed text of Matthew 28:17–20, is a visual summation of the Gospel taken to the ends of the earth. It pictures the source of the sacraments by which the risen and ascended Christ, though no longer visible to earthly sight, continues to fulfil his promise to be present with the faithful, and it anticipates his return at the end of the world.

Finally, the inscriptions that frame the Durham crucifixion provide unique documentation of some of the associations contemporaries made with the picture. The lines above the crucified Christ begin by formally addressing the beholder: *Scito quis et qualis est* ('Know who, and what kind, he is'). The inscription does not give a literal description of the accompanying hieratic image. Rather, in the manner of ekphrastic *tituli* on some Byzantine icons, it heightens the paradox and extends the visual image's range of allusion. Using a different emotional register, it poignantly speaks of one 'in whom no sin was found, who suffered such things for us, caused by this' (meaning on account of this our sin).⁴¹ The words partially echo 1 Peter 2:21–22, *Christus passus est pro nobis* [. . .] *qui peccatum non fecit, nec inventus est dolus in ore*, and bring the idea of sinless suffering for the sake of human redemption to a reading of the crucifixion image.

The inscriptions along the remaining three sides of the picture urge readers to respond to the suffering and death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ by participating in the means of their redemption: 'Casting down the author of death, renewing our life if we suffer with him/He rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God the Father/So that when we have been restored to life, we may reign with him'.⁴² The general sense derives from St Paul's familiar teaching that all who are baptised in Christ are baptised into his death in order that, 'as Christ rose from the dead (*surrexit a mortuis*) by the glory of God the Father, so we also may

39 Columbanus, *Sermo*, 1, in *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. G.S.M. Walker (Dublin, 1957), p. 60, ll. 16–23; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 9:19:45; Bede, *Homelia*, 2:8, *CCSL*, 122, pp. 233–38.

40 E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the baptismal liturgy* (London, 1970), pp. 29, 187, 207, 218.

41 *Scito quis et qualis est qui talia cuius titulus cui / nulla est inventa passus p(ro) nobis p(ro)p(ter) hoc culpa*. O'Reilly, 'Know who and what he is', pp. 310–16.

42 *Auctorem mortis deieciens uitam nostram restituens si tamen conpatiamur / Surrexit a mortuis [. . .] sedet ad dexteram d(e)i patris / Ut nos cum resuscitatos simul et regnare faciat [. . .]* Transcribed and trans. in *Durham Gospels*, p. 59.

walk in newness of life' (Romans 6:3–4). Christ, in dying and rising from the dead, overcame sin but, in order to live with him, each of the faithful needs to be crucified with him and die to sin (Romans 6:5–9; Colossians 2:12–13). The Pauline images are concerned with the continuing inner conversion of the baptised and the *transitus* from death to life. Leo the Great commented that if we truly believe what we profess in the Creed, then [62]

in Christ we are crucified, we are dead, we are buried; on the third day too, we are raised. Hence, the apostle says: 'If you have risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting on God's right hand'.

(Colossians 3:1–4; 2:12)⁴³

The belief expressed in the Durham inscriptions that 'If we suffer with him [. . .] together we shall reign' (see Romans 8:17 and 2 Timothy 2:12) summarises a major Pauline theme of continuing inner conversion that repeatedly occurs in patristic and monastic literature. Cassian, for example, presented the humility and obedience of the monastic life itself as a daily crucifixion and dying to the world, so that 'you no longer live, but he lives in you who was crucified for you' (Galatians 2:20). The monk, as though fixed to the gibbet of the cross, directs the gaze of his heart to the heavenly place where he is sure he will go.⁴⁴ The Rule of St Benedict describes lifelong monastic obedience to Christ's teaching as 'a share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom'.⁴⁵

Columbanus' *Regula monachorum* opens with insistence on obedience, which was exemplified in Christ's humble obedience to the Father, even to the point of death on the cross (Philippians 2:5–8); he cites Christ's own command that his disciples should take up the cross and follow him (Matthew 10:38). Monks are to be crucified to the world (Galatians 6:14) and seek heavenly things.⁴⁶ In Epistle 4, Columbanus exhorted his monks to be 'sharers in the Lord's Passion; for if we suffer with him, together we shall reign' (see Romans 8:17, 2 Timothy 2:12).⁴⁷ This spiritual counsel, very close to that inscribed on the Durham crucifixion, stems from the belief that the solidarity of Christ's divine nature with his sinless human nature, which brought about human salvation, requires that redeemed humanity should be united with him. Like Augustine, Leo the Great and Gregory the Great, Columbanus spoke of the crucified Christ as *exemplum* and *sacramentum*, both the example of humble submission to the divine will and the mystery by which humanity is restored and enabled to follow him:

43 Leo, *Tractatus*, 72:3, *De passione Domini*, CCSL, 138A, pp. 443–44, ll 57–64.

44 *Institutes*, 4:34, 35: *John Cassian: The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Mahwah, NJ, 2000), pp. 97–98; *Conlationes*, 19:8: *Jean Cassien Conférences*, 3, ed. E. Pichery (Paris, 1959), p. 46.

45 *The Rule of St Benedict*, ed. Timothy Fry (Collegeville, MN, 1980), Prologue, p. 166.

46 *Opera*, pp. 125, 127; see *Instructio*, 10:2, p. 103: 'we cannot live to him unless we first die to ourselves, that is, to our wills'

47 Columbanus, Ep. 4:6, *Opera*, p. 33.

The Gospels are full of this matter, and of it they are chiefly composed; for this is the truth of the Gospel, that the true disciples of Christ crucified should follow him with the cross. A great example has been shown, a great mystery [*sacramentum*] has been declared; the Son of God willingly, for 'he was offered up because he himself willed it' (Isaiah 53. 7), mounted the cross as a [63] criminal, 'leaving to us', as it is written, 'an example [*exemplum*]', that we should follow in his footsteps' (1 Peter 2:21). Blessed then is the man who becomes a sharer in this Passion and this shame. For there is something wonderful there concealed.⁴⁸

All 'the secrets of salvation' (*salutis mysteria*) are hidden in this paradox and from it proceeds Columbanus' teaching on monastic obedience and humility as pre-eminently the way of the cross and therefore the way of perfection.

Word and image in the Durham Gospels summon the reader to come before the gaze of the crucified Christ, to see who and what he is, and to respond by imitating him. Potentially, the act of seeing is both revelatory and transformative.

St Gall Gospels

The Durham crucifixion has some unique features but its basic iconographic type recurs in Irish manuscripts, metalwork and stone carving over a long period, modified by variant details and differing contexts.⁴⁹ It appears at the end of the St Gall Gospels, probably of the middle to late eighth century (Plate 9.11).⁵⁰ Again, Christ's suffering and death are not realistically represented, but the nails and side wound are indicated and Christ is not as austere frontal and hieratic a figure as in the Durham Gospels: his youthful beardless face is slightly turned aside and his feet and lower legs are seen in profile. Above the cross-beam are two angels, rather than cherubim, holding books. There is no *titulus*. The cross-beam is higher than in the Durham Gospels but all four straight projections of the cross extend to the frame.⁵¹ Christ spans the cross with arms horizontally outstretched.

48 *Evangelia plena sunt de hac causa et inde sunt maxime conscripta: haec est enim veritas evangelii, ut veri Christi crucifixi discipuli eum sequantur cum cruce. Grande exemplum ostensum est, grande sacramentum declaratum est: Dei filius voluntarius (oblatus est enim quia ipse voluit) crucem ascendit ut reus, relinquens nobis, ut scriptum est, exemplum, ut sequamur vestigia eius. Beatus igitur est, qui huius passionis et huius confusionis fit particeps. Inest enim ibi aliquid admirabile celatum:* Columbanus, Ep. 4:6, *Opera*, p. 31; Leo, *Tr.*, 63:4 and *Tr.*, 72:1, *CCSL*, 138A, pp. 384–85, II 64–73, pp. 441–42, II 15–19.

49 Peter Harbison, 'The bronze crucifixion plaque said to be from St John's (Rinnagan), near Athlone', *Journal of Irish Archaeology*, 2 (1984), pp. 1–18.

50 St Gallen Stiftsbibliothek Cod. Sang. 51, p. 266.

51 Robert Stevick, 'A geometer's art: the full-page illuminations in St Gallen Stiftsbibliothek Cod. Sang. 51, and Insular gospel books of the 8th century', *Scriptorium*, 44 (1990), pp. 161–92 at 186, 188, notes the golden mean in the ratio of the crossbeam to the vertical shaft.

The composition is animated by the looping agitated ribbon folds of the sleeveless garment of reddish purple that forms Christ's body. In a Christian context, the ancient lozenge-shaped symbol of the *tetragonus mundi* or fourfold world could signify Christ as the divine Creator-Logos. At the beginning of the St Gall Gospels, this symbol is conspicuous at the centre of the diagonal cross that [64] forms the initial Greek letter *chi* of Christ's name, announcing his incarnation at Matthew 1:18; here at the close of the book, the lozenge shape is concealed in the pattern of drapery on the breast of the Crucified.

In the text of the St Gall Gospels, the unique account of the wounding of Christ's side from John's Gospel (John 19:34) is interpolated into Matthew's Gospel on page 75, following the description of how one who stood at the cross offered Christ a sponge of vinegar on a reed (Matthew 27:49): *Alius autem accepta lancea pupungit latus eius et exit aqua et sanguis* ('Another, however, having taken a lance, pierced his side and water and blood came out'). Martin MacNamara has noted that the interpolation, which represents an early harmonising tradition witnessed in some fourth-century Greek manuscripts, was transmitted in Latin Gospel texts largely through Irish manuscripts.⁵²

In the context of a Gospel book, the Insular iconography of the crucified Christ with wounded side would particularly have evoked the Eucharist. In the account of the institution of the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:23–5, Christ identifies the bread with his body, *quod pro vobis tradetur*, and the wine with his blood, and commands that the bread and wine be received in commemoration of his death and in anticipation of his future return: 'For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink this cup, you show forth the death of the Lord, until he come'. This verse begins the lection 1 Corinthians 11:26–32 in the Irish Stowe Missal.⁵³ A series of scriptural acclamations at the fraction includes the text, 'the bread which we break is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia. The chalice which we bless is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia' (see 1 Corinthians 10:16–17).⁵⁴

The belief that each celebration of the Eucharist 'shows forth the Lord's death' had been allusively developed in patristic tradition and liturgy, but the symbolic re-enactment of the Passion at the Eucharistic altar came to be more overtly presented as a series of parallels, impressing on the faithful that in receiving the sacrament they were united to the crucified body. In the Irish vernacular commentary on the Mass, which was appended to the Latin texts of the Stowe Missal, probably soon after its completion, c. 800, the stages of Christ's Passion and resurrection recalled in the liturgical actions of the Eucharist are spelled out. The *commixtio*,

52 Martin MacNamara, 'Bible text and illumination in St Gall Stiftsbibliothek Codex 51, with special reference to Longinus in the crucifixion scene' in Mark Redknapp, Nancy Edwards, Susan Youngs, Alan Lane and Jeremy Knight (eds), *Pattern and purpose in Insular art* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 191–202 at pp. 193–94.

53 Dublin, RIA, MS D.II.3, fols. 12–67: fols. 15–15v, 33v, *The Stowe Missal*, ed. G.F. Warner (London, 1911), p. 5: *Fratres, quotiescumque manducabitis panem hunc, et bibetis calicem istum, mortem domini adnunciabitis donec ueniat.*

54 *The Stowe Missal*, II, pp. 5, 18.

or mixing of water and wine in the chalice before consecration, is interpreted as symbolising the union of Christ's divinity with his humanity, and his union with humankind, at his conception. The host on the paten is the body of Christ on the cross; the *fractio panis* before the communion is the breaking of [65] Christ's body with the nails and the spear, when baptism and the Eucharist were born from his side; the priest cuts off a fragment of the host, as Christ's right side was pierced.⁵⁵

In the St Gall crucifixion image, however, the wound is indicated by the position of the spear-bearer on Christ's left. John's Gospel does not specify on which side Christ was wounded. The usual depiction of the wound, not on the side of the heart but on Christ's right side, in both Eastern and Western crucifixion scenes, doubtless to some extent reflects the general favouring of *dextra* rather than *sinister* found in many cultural contexts, including numerous biblical texts. Because of Christ's identification as the new temple, prefigured in the temple in Jerusalem (John 2:19–21), the healing water of life that issued from the right side of the temple in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 47:1–2) was in exegesis and liturgy related to the healing sacramental stream that issued from Christ's side on the cross.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Bede commented that the door leading to the upward spiral stair within the temple was aptly placed on the right side of the building (1 Kings 6:8), 'because holy church believes that Christ's right side was opened by the soldier'. Noting, as Augustine had done, that the verb used in John 19:34 is 'opened' (*unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit*), Bede regarded the wound in Christ's right side as the door of salvation, opened to admit the faithful, through baptism and the Eucharist, to their heavenward mystical ascent.⁵⁷

The depiction of the spear-bearer on Christ's left in the St Gall Gospels and in most other examples of the Irish crucifixion type (including the Athlone Plaque, the Southampton Psalter, some of the late cast crucifixion plaques and all but four of the high crosses), distinguishes them from almost all surviving early crucifixion scenes elsewhere, though there is no evidence to suggest the motif represents a doctrinal difference. The assumption that it is the periphery's conservative preservation of a revered early Christian type, superseded elsewhere, is difficult to demonstrate.

One of the earliest Western representations of the crucifixion, showing Christ wearing the brief loincloth or *subligaculum*, depicts Mary and John to his right and a figure standing on his left with a raised hand holding the remnant of a dagger.⁵⁸ In the same set of Maskell Ivories from Rome, c. 420–30, the wound is also indicated on Christ's left side in the scene, where he reveals it to Thomas as a visible proof of the reality of his bodily resurrection (John 20:25–28). An Eastern

55 Translation: *Stowe Missal*, ii, pp. 41–2.

56 É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the rood*, p. 151.

57 *Et bene in parte domus dextrae quia dextrum eius latus a milite apertum sancta credit ecclesia*: Bede, *De templo* and *In Ezram et Neemiam*, CCSL, 119A, pp. 166, 300–301.

58 Maskell Ivories, British Museum: see Harley McGowan, 'The Maskell Passion Ivories and Greco-Roman art', in Mullins et al., *Envisioning Christ on the Cross*, pp. 13–33.

example much closer to the Insular crucifixion type, in that it depicts Christ's full-length robe with long sleeves, the cup-shaped sponge and the sponge-bearer and spear-bearer to Christ's right and left respectively, is a gilded silver paten, now believed to have been made in central Asia in the ninth or tenth century, though showing [66] similarities with early works from Syria and Palestine, such as the *ampullae* from the holy places. It shows, however, two sacramental streams issuing separately from beneath Christ's right and left armpits.⁵⁹ The idea that the spear went through Christ's body, piercing both sides, is perhaps suggested in Prudentius' composition of *tituli*, which purport to accompany pictorial scenes from sacred history. The caption for the Passion begins 'Pierced through either side, Christ gives forth water and blood'.⁶⁰

The Durham Gospels crucifixion shows the wound on Christ's right, as do a few later Irish examples in metalwork and stone, the fragmentary stone carving from the Calf of Man, and the Insular-influenced image in the Würzburg Pauline Epistles.⁶¹ The Athlone Plaque is of interest, for it is closer to the Durham crucifixion than to St Gall in depicting Christ's long-sleeved garment and the expanded terminals of the cross, yet it shows the spear-bearer on Christ's left. The Irish commentary on the Mass appended to the Stowe Missal assumes the wound was on Christ's right, but its account of how this is symbolised in the actions of the fraction of the host may indicate a potential source of confusion. The particle cut off from the bottom of the half of the host on the priest's left hand is described as 'the figure of the wounding with the lance in the armpit of the right side; for westwards was Christ's face on the cross, to wit, *contra ciuitatem*, and eastwards was the face of Longinus; what to him was the left to Christ was the right'.⁶²

In the Durham Gospels, the descriptive name *Longinus* (lance-bearer) is written beside the figure on Christ's right, as is the equivalent in the Rabbula Gospels. In the St Gall crucifixion, the unnamed figure with the spear, standing on Christ's left, receives a thin stream of blood from Christ's wounded side into his eye. This is probably the earliest pictorial witness to the apocryphal story that blood from Christ's wound healed Longinus of his blindness. The origins of the story are uncertain. It features, with variants, in the rich tradition of apocrypha in Irish sources, but mostly at a later date than the St Gall Gospels, as in the *Acts of Pilate* (*Gospel of Nicodemus*). Its earliest appearance, however, is in Blathmac's

59 *Byzantium, 330–1453*, ed. Robin Cormack and Maria Vassilaki (London, 2008), cat. 286.

60 *Traiectus per utrumque latus laticem atque cruorem / Christus agit: Tituli historiarum*, 42, Prudentius, ed. and trans H.J. Thomson (2 vols, Cambridge, MA, 1961), ii, p. 367.

61 Harbison, 'The bronze crucifixion plaque', 5–7 notes examples, including the crosses at Moone, Castledermot south, Ullard and Arboe, and the Calf of Man panel, pl. 5. Cormac Bourke, 'The chronology of Irish crucifixion plaques' in R.M. Spearman and John Higgitt (eds), *The age of migrating ideas: early medieval art in northern Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 175–81, figs 21:1b–f; see Griffin Murray, 'Irish crucifixion plaques: a reassessment', in Juliet Mullins, Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Richard Hawtree (eds), *Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the early medieval West* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 286–317.

62 Stowe Missal, ii, 41.

eighth-century poem on Mary, which tells how, at the crucifixion, 'his heart was pierced, wine was spilled [. . .] the blood of Christ flowing through his gleaming sides'; the same blood instantly 'cured the fully blind man who, openly with his two hands, was plying the lance'.⁶³ [67]

The visual reference to the Longinus story in the St Gall crucifixion may seem a narrative intrusion into a symbolic image, but it is not arbitrary. The healing of Longinus' blindness and his consequent conversion emphasises the theme of physical sight and spiritual insight, already present in the canonical Gospel text. The evangelist, writing in the person of an eye-witness to the wounding of Christ's side, declares: 'he who saw it has given testimony and his testimony is true [. . .] that you may believe' (John 19:34–5). Instead of the spear-bearer, unique to John's account, Matthew and Mark describe the Roman centurion who, standing by the cross and watching the eschatological signs accompanying Christ's death, was brought to recognise the identity of the Crucified: 'Truly this was the Son of God' (Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39). The accounts are in effect harmonised in the later recension of the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate*, and in the Irish *Passion of Longinus* in the Leabhar Breac, where Longinus is identified with the centurion.⁶⁴

The St Gall image tells the apocryphal story with extreme economy. The pupil of Longinus' left eye is still an unseeing slit but the right eye into which the healing blood falls has already been made whole. Following Longinus' gaze as he looks up at Christ and sees the source of his physical healing, the reader is drawn to look on this corporeal image with the inner eye and to see the source of salvation.

Whereas the Durham Gospels presents Christ crucified, risen, ascended and glorified in a single image, in the St Gall Gospels the theme is distributed over two facing pages that have complementary frames and compositions; the diptych concludes and epitomises the Gospel book (pp. 266–7). opposite the crucifixion is the vision of the risen and ascended Christ in the glory of his *parousia* or Second Coming, attended by angels blowing trumpets. The twelve apostles stand in the lower register looking up, as at the ascension, when they were assured that the same Jesus taken up from them into heaven would come 'in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11).

St Paul proclaimed that 'he who descended is the same who ascended above all the heavens that he might fill all things' (Ephesians 4:10). The identity of Christ's person in the two facing scenes in the St Gall Gospels, however, is not represented by duplication of the features and pose of his head. The frontal, bearded, hieratic

63 *The Poems of Blathmac Son of Cu Brettan*, ed. and trans. James Carney (Dublin, 1964), stanzas 57–58, pp. 20–21; McNamara, 'Bible text and illumination', pp. 197–200; Harbison, 'The bronze crucifixion plaque', 13; Ann Dooley, 'The Gospel of Nicodemus in Ireland' in Zbigniew Izydorczyk (ed.), *The medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: texts, intertexts and contexts in Western Europe* (Tempe, AZ, 1997), pp. 361–401 at pp. 365–68.

64 For the depiction of the crucifixion in the homilies preserved in the Leabhar Breac, see Juliet Mullins, 'Preaching the Passion: *imitatio Christi* and the homilies of the Leabhar Breac', in Juliet Mullins, Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Richard Hawtree (eds), *Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the early medieval West* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 195–213.

Christ, bearing the triumphal standard of the cross, reveals his exaltation and authority, described by Paul. Christ had reconciled all humanity to God 'in one body by the cross' (Ephesians 2:16); God raised him from the dead to the heavenly places and 'made him head over all the Church, which is his body' (Ephesians 1:20–3; [68] 5:23, 30). Augustine emphasised that this body 'cannot be deprived of its head; if the head is in glory forever, so are the limbs'. Though the head of the body is in heaven and its members on earth, at the ascension the head went before as an assurance that the members of the body would follow. Meanwhile, members of the body are to serve him and grow in unity and likeness to him.⁶⁵ Using the same Pauline image, Gregory the Great said that Christ through his incarnate body achieved immortality for humanity and in his ecclesial body brings them to perfection. Gregory therefore urged all the members of Christ's body to grow spiritually 'unto a perfect man, into the measure of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13), like the holy apostles who stood near to the Saviour, 'as the chest cleaved to the head'.⁶⁶ Columbanus repeatedly used the Ephesians metaphor to argue that belief in the unity of Christ's person requires the unity and fraternal love of the members of his body on earth in carrying out his commandments.⁶⁷

In the St Gall Gospels, the unified body of the faithful is represented by the apostles, set beneath the half-length figure of Christ their head.⁶⁸ The apostles share one figural type and pose, as on the high cross at Moone, and are differentiated only by the colours and folds of their garments. They are identified by their number.⁶⁹ Augustine and Gregory saw the universal nature of the church symbolised in that number, divisible into four parts of three each.⁷⁰ The numerological significance of the twelve apostles taking the fourfold Gospel and baptism in the name of the Trinity to the four corners of the world, in accordance with Christ's command in Matthew 28:19 to teach all peoples, was a patristic *topos* well known to Insular commentators.⁷¹

65 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, CCSL, 39, Psalms 89:5; Psalms 90, 2:14, pp. 1269–70. Leo the Great on the Ascension, *Tractatus*, 73:4, CCSL, 138A, pp. 452–53: 'the hope of the body is raised, whither the glory of the head has gone before'.

66 *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, CCSL, 142 (1971), 1:6, 8, p. 71.

67 Columbanus, *Opera*, Ep. 2:8, p. 20, ll 30–33; p. 22, ll 16–20, citing Ephesians 1:2, 4:13, and Ep. 5:13, p. 50, ll 24–27, p. 52, ll 10–13, citing Ephesians 2:14, 4:10.

68 For the *figura* of 'Christ, the head, and his body, the church' as the first of the rules in Tyconius' handbook on biblical interpretation, *Liber regularum*, summarised by Augustine in *De doctrina christiana* and used by Bede and Irish commentators, see Carol Farr's discussion of the Book of Kells, fol. 202v: *The Book of Kells: its function and audience* (London, 1997), pp. 66–75, 91–92.

69 George Henderson, 'The representation of the apostles in Insular art, with special reference to the new apostles frieze at Tarbat, Ross-shire' in Alastair Minnis and Jane Roberts (eds), *Text, image and interpretation: studies in Anglo-Saxon literature and its Insular context in honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 473–94 at pp. 477–80.

70 *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 86:4, pp. 1201–1202; Gregory, *Moralia in Iob*, 1, 14, 19, CCSL, 143, p. 34, ll. 22–25.

71 Bede, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, 1:16, CCSL, 121, pp. 11–12; Bede, *Homelia*, 1:13, CCSL, 122, p. 126; Irish Reference Bible: Paris, BN, MS lat. 11561, fols. 132, 183v–88.

In the St Gall Gospels, the arrangement of the apostles in four groups of three draws attention to the sacramental sign of their number. At the same acute angle as the spear-bearer and sponge-bearer look up at the Crucified in the facing picture, the apostles look up towards the glorified Christ at his return. The pupils of one apostle alone, at the centre of the upper row, turn to invite the viewer's gaze [69] too. Looking at the diptych, members of the body of Christ on earth see an affirmation of belief in Christ's overcoming of death, promising eternal life with him for all who follow the faith and practice handed on by the apostles.

The Southampton Psalter

A third manuscript example of the Irish iconography of the crucifixion survives from the post-Viking period in the different context of the archaic Irish Southampton Psalter, c.1000, which has old Irish as well as Latin glosses (Figure 8.1).⁷² Its preservation of a hallowed early Irish type is highlighted by comparison with the contemporary Ramsey Psalter, whose crucifixion frontispiece illustrates the contrary direction taken by late Anglo-Saxon art.⁷³ During the period of Benedictine monastic reform in the tenth and eleventh centuries, Anglo-Saxon art was strongly influenced by Continental monasticism, spirituality and *ars sacra* – liturgical manuscripts, ivories and precious metalwork – which had assimilated and adapted a much greater range of figural art and iconography from Late Antiquity than appears in early Insular art.⁷⁴ The drawing of the crucifixion in the Ramsey Psalter movingly portrays the dead Christ. His humanity is conveyed through the naturalistic representation of his body, clothed only in a loincloth. Blood issues from his five wounds, his eyes are closed, his head slumped on his shoulder and he is flanked, not by the sponge-bearer and spear-bearer, but by his grieving mother and beloved disciple; there are no angelic attendants.

The crucifixion is depicted with many iconographic variants in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts but centres on the stripped body of Christ, witnessed by Mary and John. An important exception is the Tiberius Psalter, c. 1050, which shows Christ in a loincloth but preserves the flanking figures of the spear-bearer and the sponge-bearer, with cup-shaped sponge, from the early Irish type. Christ is pierced beneath the right arm, blood spurts from the wound and, in allusion to the apocryphal story of Longinus, the spear-bearer rubs his eyes and raises his head

72 Cambridge, St John's College MS C9 (59), fol. 38v. J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular manuscripts, 6th to 9th century* (London, 1978), cat. 74.

73 London, BL, Harley MS 2904, fol. 3v; *Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, 900–1066*, ed. Elzbieta Temple (London, 1976), cat. 41, pl. 142; Jennifer O'Reilly, 'St John as a figure of the contemplative life: text and image in the art of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform' in N. Ramsey, M. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (eds), *St Dunstan, his life, times and cult* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 165–85, pl. V.

74 Barbara C. Raw, *Anglo-Saxon crucifixion iconography and the art of the monastic revival* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 95–110.



Figure 8.1 The Southampton Psalter. The Crucifixion. By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge. fol. 35v (Photo: Carl Impey).

to look up at Christ.⁷⁵ The crucifixion scene is part of a prefatory Christological pictorial cycle that includes scenes of David overcoming the lion and Goliath, subjects also preserved in Irish Psalter illustration.

In the New Testament and patristic exegesis, in the monastic office, private prayers and the liturgy, the psalms are interpreted as revealing the mystery of [70] Christ.⁷⁶ In Ireland, there was also a tradition of psalm commentary that gave a historical as well as a spiritual interpretation and emphasised the typology of David and Christ.⁷⁷ The Irish Southampton Psalter follows a patristic practice

75 O'Reilly, 'Early medieval text and image: the wounded and exalted Christ', *Peritia*, 6–7 (1987–8), pp. 94–100.

76 Martin McNamara, 'Christology and the interpretation of the psalms in the early Irish church' in T. Finan and V. Twomey (eds), *Studies in patristic Christology* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 196–233 at pp. 209–16.

77 Martin McNamara, 'Psalter text and psalter study in the early Irish church', *PRLA*, 73C (1973), pp. 201–98.

of dividing the psalm text at Psalms 1, 51 and 101, but unusually has framed figural images opposite the framed initial pages of each of the three divisions. Kathleen Openshaw argued that, within what was probably a well-established Irish Psalter tradition, the three pictures do not directly illustrate the psalms they preface but together present a symbolic programme depicting spiritual combat against evil, pictured through the typology of David and Christ.⁷⁸ The first and third divisions open with scenes of David overcoming the lion and slaying Goliath. They are old Testament types or prefigurings of Christ overcoming sin, death and the devil, which is represented by the scene of the crucifixion, folio 38v, at the second division of the psalter. The images provide a meditative focus for the reader who prays the psalms and shares with Christ in the daily spiritual battle.⁷⁹

The early Insular iconography of the crucifixion is preserved in a highly stylised form in the Southampton Psalter. The hair, ears and body of Christ, as well as his purple garment, are rendered as abstract shapes and patterns formed of Celtic spirals, peltas and interlace. The constituent elements of the composition are outlined and connected by calligraphic dotting. Christ is a staring, orant figure, seen as though standing before the unsupported horizontal beam of the cross with his feet turned outwards; the small spear-bearer on his left does not look up but the sponge-bearer, also in profile, is larger and has a prominent eye. The stem supporting the sponge extends from his right hand, pierces his face just by his eye, then rises between the outstretched right arm of Christ and the crossbeam towards Christ's face. The modern viewer may find this particular example of Insular interwoven forms bizarre and yet acknowledge that it succeeds in drawing attention to the direction of the sponge-bearer's gaze, just as the spear and the spurt of blood in the St Gall crucifixion connect the spear-bearer's eye with Christ and also guide the eye of the beholder.⁸⁰

Together with the more richly allusive spear, the cup-shaped sponge was an integral part of the Irish iconography of the crucifixion and it too could have served to cue familiar texts and images in the memory and imagination of a meditative contemporary reader. It may be useful, for example, simply to recall [71] here one brief detail about the sponge in St John's account of the crucifixion and how densely that was read by patristic and Insular commentators. Whereas Matthew and Mark say the sponge of gall or vinegar was raised to Christ's lips on a reed (Matthew 27:48; Mark 15:36), John specifies that the sponge was filled from a vessel and put upon hyssop (John 19:29).

78 Kathleen Openshaw, 'The symbolic illustration of the psalter: an Insular tradition', *Arte Medievale*, 2nd ser., 6 (1992), pp. 41–59.

79 Kathleen Openshaw, 'Weapons in the daily battle: images of the conquest of evil in the early medieval psalter', *Art Bulletin*, 75 (1993), pp. 17–38 at 19–20, 24.

80 See Isabel Henderson, 'Understanding the figurative style and decorative programme of the Book of Deer' in Katherine Forsyth (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Deer* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 32–66 at pp. 33–37.

The hyssop in John's account of the crucifixion was directly related in exegesis to the image of hyssop in Psalm 50, the penitential psalm *Miserere me*, which, with the customary canticles, closes the first division of the psalms and precedes the crucifixion picture in the Southampton Psalter. Those praying through the words of the psalmist seek divine forgiveness: 'Have mercy on me, o God [. . .] wash me from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin [. . .] You will sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed; you will wash me and I shall be whiter than snow' (Psalms 50:3–4, 9). In his commentary on the psalm, Cassiodorus notes that hyssop was dipped in sacrificial blood and sprinkled on the unclean in ritual purification (Lev 14:6) and interprets the allusion to this use of hyssop in Psalm 50:9 as denoting the mysteries of absolution of sins through the saving blood of Christ.⁸¹ The connection was already made in the New Testament's presentation of the redeeming sacrifice of Christ as foreshadowed when Moses purged the people by sprinkling on them the blood of calves and goats with hyssop (Hebrews 9:11–20).

It was earlier noted that Augustine found in St John's account of Christ's thirst and his reception of the prophesied sponge of vinegar (John 19:28–30) an encoded revelation of 'the Mediator between God and man' (1 Timothy 2:5), who both suffered these things and divinely arranged them for the sake of human salvation. Harmonising the Gospel accounts, Augustine saw the sponge of vinegar as placed on hyssop and raised up on a reed. He noted that hyssop is a lowly herb with purgative properties. It betokens the humility of Christ: 'Hence it is said in the psalm, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean' (Psalms 50:7)'.⁸² This exegesis is closely repeated in the Irish Reference Bible's commentary on John; the plant lore on hyssop's purgative powers and its use in the sprinkling of lamb's blood in old Testament ritual cleansing was also transmitted for Insular writers by Isidore's *Etymologiae*.⁸³

Augustine expanded on the Christological importance of what is signified by hyssop: 'it is by Christ's humility that we are cleansed because, had he not "humbled himself, and become obedient unto the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8), his blood certainly would not have been shed for the remission of sins, or, in other [72] words, for our cleansing'.⁸⁴ Hyssop also signifies the desired penitential response of the faithful, for it is the humility of Christ, in laying aside the glory of his divinity at his incarnation and suffering death in obedience to the Father's will, which both effects the redemption of sinful humankind and offers the pattern to be followed by the 'contrite and humbled heart'. Augustine here refers to the psalmist's understanding that the sacrifice that God truly desires from the faithful

81 Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms* (3 vols, New York, 1990), i, p. 501. Hyssop was also used to sprinkle the blood of lambs on Israelite households at their deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:7, 21–7); St John alludes to the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:46) in his account of the wounding of Christ's side (John 19:37).

82 Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium*, Tr., 119:4, 5, pp. 659–60.

83 Paris, BN, MS lat. 11561, fol. 182v; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 17:9, 39.

84 *In Iohannis evangelium*, Tr., 119:4, pp. 659–60.

is ‘an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, o God, thou wilt not despise’ (Psalms 50:17).⁸⁵

The Book of Kells

The Book of Kells is most unusual in having two full-page figural images of Christ within the Gospel text, each accompanied by a full-page framed enlargement of the opening words of the adjacent text. In Matthew’s account of the crucifixion, there is a blank page (fol. 123v) that may possibly have been reserved for another such figural image.⁸⁶ The facing recto, folio 124, is entirely given over to the ornamented framing and enlargement of the opening words of Matthew 27:38, ‘Then there were crucified with him two thieves’ (Figure 8.2, Plate 8.1).⁸⁷

The passage that immediately precedes these words in Matthew’s Gospel appears on folio 123, the recto of the blank page. It describes how ‘They came to the place called Golgotha, the place of Calvary. And they gave him wine to drink mingled with gall’ (see Psalms 68:21); they divided his garments, fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 21:19, which is quoted: Then, ‘sitting down, they watched him there’. Finally, the written *causam* of his offence was placed above his head on the cross: ‘This is Jesus, the king of the Jews’ (Matthew 27:33–7). The centred last line on folio 123 contains simply the abbreviated wording of the superscription or *titulus*: *Hic est rex iudeorum*. As this page has only fifteen lines of text, several of them very short, rather than the usual seventeen lines, the next half-dozen words of Matthew’s Gospel could easily have been fitted in after the *titulus*. Instead, these words were separately framed and enlarged on folio 124.

The description of Christ crucified between or in the midst of two thieves occurs in all four of the Gospel accounts.⁸⁸ In Mark 15:27–28, it is already interpreted as a fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy that the Messiah would be ‘numbered [73] among the wicked’, which continues, ‘he has borne the sins of many and has prayed for the transgressors’ (Isaiah 53:12); the prophecy is duly noted in Augustine’s commentary on John’s account.⁸⁹ In another context, Éamonn Ó Carragáin has discussed the old Testament canticle from Habacuc, a chant in the Roman liturgy probably

85 The words are part of the psalm text that directly faces the crucifixion image in the late Anglo-Saxon Winchcombe Psalter, Cambridge University Library MS Fol. I. 23, fols. 87v–88, c. 1030–50, *The Cambridge illuminations: ten centuries of book production in the medieval West*, ed. P. Binski and S. Panayotova (London, 2005), cat. 17.

86 These three examples occur at passages that had been highlighted by a minor enlarged initial in earlier Insular gospel books: Patrick McGurk, ‘Two notes on the Book of Kells and its relation to other Insular gospel books’, *Scriptorium*, 9 (1955), pp. 105–107.

87 Vulgate: *Tunc crucifixi sunt cum eo duos latrones*; the Book of Kells, fol. 124 has *Tunc crucifixerant*.

88 Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27–28; Luke 23:33; John 19:18.

89 *Et cum sceleratis reputatus est et ipse peccata multorum tulit et pro transgressoribus rogavit* (Isaiah 53:1, Vulgate); *et cum iniquis reputatus est* (Mark 15:28); *et inter iniquos deputatus est*: Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium*, Tr., 117, 3, p. 653.



Figure 8.2 The Book of Kells, possible crucifixion placement. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS XXX, fol. 123v.

dating from the fifth century, used weekly at Lauds and, together with John's Gospel account of the Passion, in the readings on Good Friday.⁹⁰ The *vetus latina* version of Habacuc in patristic and Insular exegesis and the liturgy includes the enigmatic prophecy that the Lord will be recognised or made known between two living beings (Hab 3:2).⁹¹ One of several ways in which the prophecy was seen to be fulfilled was in the revelation of Christ's humanity and divinity at his crucifixion between two thieves.⁹² In some early symbolic crucifixion images, as at Santa

90 For the commemoration of the cross in ritual and word on Good Friday, see Van Tongeren, 'Imagining the Cross on Good Friday' in Juliet Mullins et al., *Envisioning Christ on the Cross*, pp. 34–51.

91 *In medio duorum animalium innotesceris*. É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the rood*, pp. 184–85.

92 Bede, *De tabernaculo*, CCSL, 119A, p. 20; *In Habacuc*, CCSL, 119B, p. 383. In the Book of Kells, fol. 183v, immediately next to the account of Christ crucified between thieves in Mark 15:27, a small lion is pictured lying down but with his eye open, which possibly highlights in another way the text's revelation of Christ's two natures. In a work well known to Insular commentators, Gregory the Great had used the Physiologus tradition that the lion sleeps with its eyes open as an



Plate 8.1 The Book of Kells. Opening words of Matthew 27:38: 'Then there were crucified with him two thieves'. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS A.I.6, fol. 124r.

Sabina, Christ stands manifested between two very small symmetrical figures of the thieves; on a metalwork plaque from Clonmacnoise he stands between two small flanking crosses, which form an addition to the basic crucifixion iconography the plaque shares with the Durham and St Gall Gospels and the Southampton Psalter.⁹³

While we cannot know what iconography of the crucifixion, if any, was intended for the blank folio 123v in the Book of Kells, the layout of the facing Gospel text on folio 124 offers its own comment on the significance of the event it describes. Three groups of wide-eyed onlookers surround the framed text like the spectators at the crucifixion; they are in profile, looking from the text towards the blank page. The framed text is hard to read at first sight. The words following *Tunc crucifixerant* are set out in two widely V-shaped panels, one inverted beneath the other. In each panel, the lettering radically changes direction and the angular display script, including some obscure letter forms, is set against different coloured backgrounds, without regard to word separation. But the two inscribed V-shaped panels share a golden outline so that they can be read together as forming one diagonal cross, which is also the Greek letter *chi*.⁹⁴ [74]

On closer examination of this chiasmic structuring of the text, it can be seen that the small cross marking its beginning also forms the letter *chi*, and that the two letters that follow it (looking like R and I) are, similarly, not in Matthew's text at all; they represent the Greek letter *rho* and the Latin ending of the abbreviated sacred title, XPI, so that the text reads *Tunc crucifixerant XPI cum eo duos latrones*. This interpolation into the Gospel text, concealed from the casual glance, provides a gloss on the *titulus* of the cross contained in the previous sentence and discloses who 'the king of the Jews' really is: for those with eyes to see, the one crucified between two thieves is Christ, the prophesied Messiah.

In an arcane development of patristic custom, Hiberno-Latin commentators revealed Christ's universal sovereignty, concealed beneath the title 'king of the Jews', by expounding the symbolic significance of the three sacred languages in which, according to Luke and John, the *titulus* was written.⁹⁵ Here, however, in the context of Matthew's Gospel, the Book of Kells is elaborating a textual tradition already established in the earliest surviving illuminated

image of Christ in his two natures, 'because, in the same death in which, through his humanity, our Redeemer could sleep, through his immortal divinity he kept vigil': *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, 1, 4:1, ed. M. Adriaen, *CCSL*, 142, p. 47.

93 Bourke, 'The chronology of Irish crucifixion plaques', fig. 21a. Some of the Palestinian ampullae display the exalted cross, or the standing robed figure of Christ, between the two thieves and venerated by genuflecting figures.

94 Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 1:3:11; 1:14:14 noted that the Latin letter X signifies the cross by its shape (*crux decussata*) and that the name of Christ is written using the letter (*chi*), which makes the sign of the cross. Werckmeister, *Irish-northumbische Buchmalerei des 8. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 147–70; Suzanne Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy: the chi-rho page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio*, 36 (1980), pp. 134–59.

95 Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium*, Tr., 117, 4, 5, pp. 653–54; Robert McNally, 'The "tres linguae sacrae" in early Irish biblical exegesis', *Theological Studies*, 19 (1958), pp. 395–403 at pp. 400–401.

Insular manuscript, Durham A.II.10, the fragmentary remains of a Gospel book or New Testament. An enlarged initial letter marks the text, 'Then there were crucified with him two thieves' (Matthew 27:38).⁹⁶ In the preceding sentence, the abbreviated title of Christ is inserted into Matthew's text of the *titulus* on the cross, so that it reads *Hic est ihs xps rex iudeorum*. Exactly the same interpolation appears in the Irish Reference Bible's commentary on the *titulus* in Matthew's Gospel.⁹⁷

The Würzburg Epistles

Through the influence of the Irish and Anglo-Saxon missions to Francia, several of the Insular traditions discussed here survive in the depiction of the crucifixion in an eighth-century Continental manuscript, Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek cod. M.p.th. fol. 69, fol. 7v (Figure 8.3).⁹⁸ The image originally prefaced the text, the Pauline Epistles, which pre-eminently preach Christ crucified.⁹⁹ The Insular [75] features of the crucifixion iconography are combined with Frankish ornament and additional motifs, some of which are most unusual; some additions emphasise the eschatological character of the crucifixion scene and others extend its range of allusion. Lawrence Nees judges the image to be 'an appropriate invention by the scribe-painter for the Pauline Epistles that follow, which are the ultimate source for its theological orientation'.¹⁰⁰

The cross is covered with lozenge-shaped patterns simulating precious metal-work. It is suspended like a crucifix from a monumental arch, whose ornament incorporates multiple forms of the cross and the *chi*. Christ is an upright figure in a long-sleeved robe patterned with stylised folds, as in the Durham Gospels, though the robe is belted and his arms are outstretched from the shoulder.¹⁰¹ His

96 Durham Cathedral Library, MS A.II.10, fol. 3.

97 Paris, BN, MS lat. 11561, fol. 155v.

98 Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, cat. 55, commenting on its stylisation and colouring, thought it likely the image was a copy of an Irish model. Catherine E. Karkov, 'Tracing the Anglo-Saxons in the Epistles of Paul: the case of Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M.p.th. fol. 69' in Jane Roberts and Leslie Webster (eds), *Anglo-Saxon traces* (Tempe, AZ, 2011), pp. 133–44 at pp. 133–34 documents previous discussion of the manuscript's production in one of a group of nunneries in Franconia and its membership of a group of manuscripts that are assumed to have been written by women.

99 Examples: the crucified Christ: 1 Corinthians 1:17–24, 2:7–8, 15:3–14; Galatians 3:1, 5:1; Phil 2:8; redemption through blood of Christ: Romans 3:22–5, 5:10; dying to sin in order to live with Christ: Romans 6:2–10, 8:17; Galatians 2:20, 5:24, 6:14; 2 Timothy 2:12. The Pauline Epistles were the subject of Hiberno-Latin commentaries and received glossing in old Irish as well as Latin, notably in the eighth-century Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek Cod. M.p.th. fol. 12: Próinséas Ní Chatháin, 'Notes on the Würzburg Glosses' in Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (eds), *Ireland and Christendom: the Bible and the missions* (Stuttgart, 1987), pp. 190–99.

100 Nees, 'On the image of Christ crucified', p. 361.

101 Nees, 'On the image of Christ crucified', pp. 349–52, argues that early parallels for the long-sleeved garment of Christ in some Ottonian manuscripts and on the Lucca crucifix known as the



Figure 8.3 The Crucifixion. Würzburg Pauline Epistles, fol. 7r (Image courtesy of the University of Würzburg).

body is conformed to the cross and shares the outline of the cross-shaft; three cross-rays radiate from his head. There are no attendant cherubim or angels, but on the crossbeam are two confronted birds, reminiscent of an early Christian iconography of the exalted cross or Christogram suggesting the resurrection.¹⁰² The spear-bearer and sponge-bearer are not pictured, though their symbolic function

Volto Santo 'are entirely Western, not Eastern'. As the closest parallels, he cites Insular examples, the Durham Gospels and the Athlone Plaque, whose iconographic type became known in centres of Insular influence in Francia, as witnessed in the Würzburg Epistles. For the *Volto Santo*, see Michele Bacci, 'The *Volto Santo*'s legendary and physical image', in Juliet Mullins, Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Richard Hawtree (eds), *Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the early medieval West* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 214–33.

102 For example, Roman sarcophagus, c. 350, Vatican Museum, *Picturing the Bible: the earliest Christian art*, cat. 46; the seventh-century Valerianus Gospels, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm.6223, fol. 202v, Nees, 'On the image of Christ crucified', fig. 12.

is indicated by the shaftless head of the spear and the cup-shaped sponge, which are displayed against the body of the Crucified, on his right and left respectively.

In *De locis sanctis*, Adomnán of Iona had described how these two objects, detached from or with only part of their shafts, were displayed and revered as relics of the Passion in the holy places of Jerusalem. Recounting what he presents as the eye-witness experience of the pilgrim Arculf and recalling St John's gospel testimony of sponge and spear, Adomnán brings these two physical signs of the historical reality of the crucifixion vividly before the inner eye of the reader. 'The sponge, which was soaked in vinegar, placed on hyssop by those who crucified the Lord, and put to his lips' (see John 19:29), was viewed by pilgrims in the *exedra* situated between the basilica of Golgotha, on the site of the crucifixion, and the *martyrium*, where the cross of the Lord and the crosses of the two thieves had been [76] found, as recorded in Adomnán's accompanying plan.¹⁰³ Through the perforated lid of a reliquary, Arculf saw and touched the sponge, conserved in the silver chalice that Christ had used at the Last Supper. Arculf also saw the lance with which the soldier 'pierced the side of the Lord when he was hanging on the cross. This lance is in the porch of the basilica of Constantine (the *martyrium*), inserted in a wooden cross, and its haft is split in two parts'.¹⁰⁴

In the Würzburg crucifixion image, the two diminutive crosses of the thieves are depicted below the crossbeam, rather as the letters *alpha* and *omega* are suspended like pendant jewels from the arms of the exalted cross displayed beneath an honorific arch in contemporary Frankish manuscripts that show late antique and Lombardic influences.¹⁰⁵ Christ's features – the beard and moustache, the long-sleeved robe and orant pose – recur in miniature in the two thieves, whose bodies are scarcely to be distinguished from their crosses.

Beneath the towering crucifixion image, and similarly spanning the width between the columns supporting the arch, there is a boat carrying nine small figures. The second figure from the right points to the helmsman, who works the outsize steering oar; none of the others is rowing. A larger beardless figure,

103 Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, ed. and trans. Dennis Meehan (Dublin, 1983), 1:7, 8, pp. 51–53 and p. 47 for a copy of Adomnán's inscribed drawing in Vienna, Cod. 458, fol. 4v. Thomas O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the holy places* (London, 2007), pp. 177–88 and Appendix 8 on the survival and diffusion of Adomnán's text, which appears in the ninth-century catalogues of Würzburg and Bobbio.

104 *De locis sanctis*, 1:8, p. 51. The spear and sponge were not only objects of devotion but could function as symbols of Christ's victory. Pictured without their bearers, they are triumphantly displayed, like *arma Christi*, against the empty cross in the illustration to Psalm 21 in the Utrecht Psalter and they accompany the figure of Christ enthroned in glory in the Anglo-Saxon illuminations of the Galba (Æthelstan) Psalter, fol. 2v: O'Reilly, 'Early medieval text and image: the wounded and exalted Christ', *Peritia*, 6–7 (1987–8), pp. 84–85.

105 Early Christian motifs of the exalted cross with pendant *alpha* and *omega* set beneath an arch are adapted and combined in the frontispieces of the Gelasian Sacramentary, Vatican Library Reg. lat. 316, and Augustine's *Quaestiones in Heptateuch*, Paris, BN, MS lat. 12168, which also has a marigold-cross rosette and inscription, XPI IHS: *Europe in the Dark Ages*, ed. Jean Hubert, Jean Porcher and W.F. Volbach (London, 1969), pls 175, 188.

identified as Christ by his cross-nimbed halo, stands in their midst, almost on the same central axis as the cross that rises above him like a huge mast.¹⁰⁶ The boat does not provide a literal illustration of the Gospel miracles of Christ with the disciples on Lake Galilee, stilling the storm or saving Peter from the waves. Moreover, the composition and restricted palette closely unify the crucifixion scene, the figures in the boat, and the arch that frames them all.

The common patristic linking of cross and boat made use of the understanding that *lignum*, meaning wood or tree, could refer to the cross.¹⁰⁷ The Fathers sometimes saw the *lignum crucis* itself as the vessel by which the faithful [77] would be carried to their heavenly home. Patristic images of the sea-journey of the spiritual life have been recognised as an element in Irish voyage literature and in scenes of penitential monastic exile in the *Vita Columbae* and the *Vita Brendani*.¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Wooding has drawn attention to the Irish *topos* of the hide-covered boat, symbolic of the carnal, mortal nature of those who voyage through turbulent seas inhabited by demons, and cites examples of such a vessel being strengthened by wood, 'that is to say, the church is saved by the cross and death of the Lord'.¹⁰⁹ A vertically orientated panel on the eighth- or ninth-century Kilnaruane (Bantry) pillar, which was once a cross-shaft, depicts a boat with four or more rowers and a helmsman.¹¹⁰ Protective crosses appear beneath stern and bow and a further small cross is positioned behind the helmsman with a steering-oar, who, as in the Würzburg image, is not represented as Christ.

The sea-faring image in Psalm 106 (107) particularly lent itself to patristic and Insular expositions of the cross as a vessel. The psalmist extols the mercy of God in delivering those in tribulation from the enemy and the shadow of death. They are pictured in the image of those who 'go down to the sea in ships' and experience the terrors of the deep. In their affliction, they cried to the Lord, who stilled the storm 'and brought them to the haven which they wished for' (Psalms 106:23–30). Cassiodorus glosses 'ships' in verse 23 as 'the churches which sail

106 The diptych of crucifixion and parousia in the St Gall Gospels, pp. 266–67, discussed above, also depicts Christ with two different facial types.

107 New Testament references to the crucifixion such as, 'whom you put to death, hanging him *in ligno*' (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29) and 'he bore our sins in his body *super lignum*' (1 Peter 2:24), reflect Deuteronomy 21:22–3, which is cited by St Paul in Galatians 3:13. For discussion of the cross as a boat in early hymns, see Van Tongeren, 'Imagining the Cross on Good Friday' in Juliet Mullins et al., *Envisioning Christ on the Cross*, pp. 34–51.

108 Jonathan Wooding, 'St Brendan's boat: dead hides and the living sea' in John Carey, Máire Herbert and Pádraig Ó Riain (eds), *Studies in Irish hagiography: saints and scholars* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 77–92; Diarmuid Scully, 'The third voyage of Cormac in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*' in Roberts and Minnis (eds), *Text, image, interpretation*, pp. 209–32.

109 *Expositio evangelii secundum Marcum*, ed. M. Cahill, *Scriptores Celtigenae*, 2, CCSL, 82, pp. 27–28 on Mark 4:3; *Vita Brendani*, cap. 10, cited by Wooding, 'St Brendan's boat', pp. 88, 91.

110 Jonathan Wooding, 'Biblical narrative and local imagery on the Kilnaruane Cross-Shaft, Co. Cork' in Redknapp et al. (eds), *Pattern and purpose in Insular art*, pp. 253–59.

over the stormy waters of this world on the wood of the cross'.¹¹¹ Sandra McEntire has suggested that the scene in the Würzburg manuscript 'could well be the imaging of the commentary of Cassiodorus on Psalm 106, where he describes the ship which crosses the sea as having Christ as the pilot, the rowers as the apostles, and the holy pontiffs as select passengers'.¹¹²

Of closer relevance to some features of the Würzburg image, and to its function as a frontispiece to the Pauline Epistles, is Augustine's commentary on the same psalm, where he similarly interprets Psalm 106:23–30 as a metaphor of the spiritual life, with its storms of dissension and temptation, but does not describe Christ as the pilot or helmsman of the ship or the apostles as oarsmen. Rather, he emphasises that both those who steer (implying those who teach) and [78] those who are conveyed by them risk shipwreck if they do not put their trust in God.¹¹³ Augustine cites St Paul as one such steersman or helmsman (*gubernator*).

Though he might assume his readers' familiarity with Paul's own testimony that he survived literal shipwreck three times and was 'a night and a day in the depth of the sea' (2 Corinthians 11:23), Augustine quotes instead from the opening of the same epistle, from Paul's account of unspecified tribulations suffered on one of his missions when he and an unknown number of companions were so hard pressed they almost despaired of life: 'But we had in ourselves the answer to death: that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead' (2 Corinthians 1:8–9).¹¹⁴ Their story of divine deliverance and faith in the resurrection is seen to be figured in the psalmist's image: 'he brought them into the haven of their desire' (Psalms 106:30). Augustine accordingly exhorts all members of the universal church, including its helmsmen (*populi et seniores, negotiatores et gubernatores*), not to trust in their own merits and wisdom but in the mercy of God.

Discussing the common metaphor of the church or the soul as a ship, buffeted by the spiritual storms and dangers of this earthly life and providentially brought at last to the port of heaven, Hugo Rahner showed the particular influence on the patristic imagination of the sea voyage of Odysseus who sailed through tempests and temptations, longing to reach his father's house and binding himself to the mast lest he yield to the sirens' call.¹¹⁵ Ambrose, Paulinus of Nola and other Fathers urged the faithful similarly to bind themselves, 'not with corporeal fetters

111 Cassiodorus, *Expositio in psalmorum*, CCL, 98, pp. 979–80.

112 Sandra McIntire, 'The devotional context of the cross before AD1000' in Paul E. Szarmach with Virginia Darrow Oggins (eds), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon culture* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1986), pp. 345–56 at p. 351; cited by Nees, 'on the image of Christ crucified', p. 363, who also discusses nautical images in the work of Columbanus.

113 *Volens Dei ut ad eum clamarent et hi qui gubernant, et hi qui portantur, Dixit, et stetit spiritus procellae*: Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, CCL, 40, p. 1577, trans. in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christian Fathers*, 1st ser., 8, p. 534.

114 Augustine introduces Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 1:8 with *Audite de hac re vocem cuiusdam gubernatoris periclitari, humiliati, liberati*: CCL, 40, p. 1578, ll. 37–38.

115 Hugo Rahner, *Greek myths and Christian mystery* (London, 1963), pp. 328–86, figs. 9–11.

like Odysseus to the mast, but with spiritual knots to the wood of the cross' in order to avoid temptation. Christ himself was seen as being voluntarily fastened to the wood of the cross to save the human race from the shipwreck of the world.¹¹⁶ This body of patristic tradition may illuminate a novel feature in the Würzburg image.

Nees has noted that the two angels hovering beneath the thief on Christ's right, and the two black birds beneath the thief on his left, awaiting the souls of the two thieves and suggesting their different fates, present the viewer with the choice of accepting or rejecting salvation.¹¹⁷ The apocryphal detail is made intelligible by the Gospel account of the two thieves' differing responses to Christ [79] crucified. St Luke uniquely describes the Saviour's promise of paradise for the thief who recognised him, even on the cross, as Lord, king and judge, who confessed his own wrongdoing and Christ's innocence and sought entry into his kingdom. The other thief neither had appropriate fear of God nor recognised the prophesied Messiah in the figure crucified beneath the mocking *titulus*. He blasphemed, 'If you are the Christ, save yourself and us' (Luke 23:38–43). The Würzburg frontispiece reveals the identity of Christ, crucified between two thieves in fulfilment of prophecy and with the *titulus* on the cross-head entirely replaced by his sacred title, IHS XPS.¹¹⁸ The angel-like figures accompanying the penitent thief extend down to the figures in the boat below; the expository, teaching gesture of the standing figure of Christ in the boat draws attention to the crucifixion scene and the cautionary fate of the other thief. The occupants of the boat gaze out at the viewer; one echoes Christ's gesture.

The believing thief was often cited as an example of the faith that recognises the divinity of the crucified Christ. Maximus of Turin commented that the suffering of the cross, which constitutes a stumbling block to some (see 1 Corinthians 1:23), seemed to increase the thief's faith: he saw the wounds of the crucified but believed him to be God.¹¹⁹

Paulinus of Nola used the story of the blessed thief within the convention of offering spiritual consolation to a friend. He wrote to Sulpicius Severus, sending him a relic of the cross as a sign of the promised resurrection, for, 'as Scripture says, 'If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him' (Romans 8:17). He was

116 Ambrose, *Expositio in Lucam*, IV, 2, 3, *CSEL*, 32, pp. 139–41; Paulinus of Nola, *Epistula*, 23, 30, *CSEL*, 29, p. 186; Paulinus of Nola, *Epistula*, 23, 30, *CSEL*, 29, p. 186; trans. P.G. Walsh (2 vols, New York, 1967), ii, p. 33; Maximus of Turin, *Homilia*, 49, *De Cruce Domini*, 1, *PL*, 57:339.

117 Nees, 'On the image of Christ crucified', pp. 360–1, nn. 48, 49. For the role of the two thieves, identified by their apocryphal names, in another Continental crucifixion miniature with a restricted palette, Angers MS 24, and for analysis of the composition's polarities of left and right, see Beatrice Kitzinger, 'The liturgical cross and the space of the Passion: the diptych of Angers MS 24', in Juliet Mullins, Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Richard Hawtree (eds), *Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the early medieval West* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 141–59.

118 Written with a Greek *pi* rather than a *rho*.

119 *Sermons of Maximus of Turin*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York, 1989), sermon 74, pp. 181–82. Listing examples of how the humanity and divinity of Christ were manifested, Leo the Great spoke of the one who was nailed to the cross as the one who opened the gate of paradise for the thief: *Tome*, Ep. 28, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, p. 80.

here citing a well-known text of St Paul that has already been discussed in connection with the inscription of the Durham Gospels crucifixion. Paulinus hoped the relic would evoke the extreme example of faith in the resurrection shown by the thief. When he saw Christ crucified and suffering the same punishment as himself, he acknowledged him as 'the Lord of majesty' and asked 'Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom'. Through the faith of a moment, the thief was the first, before the martyrs and apostles, to enter the kingdom prepared for the blessed (Matthew 25:34).¹²⁰ Both thieves were sinners, but the penitent believer received mercy rather than judgment, a popular theme that appears in the private prayers and liturgy of the Anglo-Saxons.¹²¹

In an influential sermon on the cross, Maximus of Turin directly linked the example of the thief with the image of the boat. He argued that because Christ was willingly fastened to the wood of the cross to save the whole human race from [80] death, we too if bound to the cross, 'which is like the mast in the ship of the church', may sail through the temptations and perils of this world and reach the house of our Father in safety. As proof, he cited Christ's own words, 'for while hanging on the wood of the cross he declared to the thief beside him, "This day you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43)'. The words enable Maximus to set the thief, representing sinful humanity, in the context of salvation history and St Paul's argument that Christ died for sinners, redressing the sin of Adam; sinners, through faith, have access to this grace (see Romans 5:1–12). He describes how the thief had long been straying from his course and suffering shipwreck 'and never would have returned to paradise, his home, from which the first man had once departed, had he not been bound to the mast of the cross'.¹²² The sense is that the thief had, through his act of faith, spiritually bound himself to the cross of Christ in his last hour and was thus the first to benefit from the safe passage it offers all the faithful.

Augustine had memorably used the image of the cross as a vessel in his commentary on St John's gospel, giving metaphorical expression to aspects of the theology of the cross, the identity of Christ and the response of the faithful to the crucified Christ, which are discussed later in the commentary, in the tractates on the crucifixion. Augustine explains that trying to comprehend the divine mystery contained in John's opening acclamation, 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God', is like seeing and longing for one's native land from a distance, without knowing how to traverse the intervening sea. It was in order to bring humankind to that divinity he shares with the Father, that the Word became incarnate and 'appointed the wood (*lignum*) by which we may cross the sea. For no one is able to cross the sea of this world unless borne by the cross of Christ'.¹²³

120 Ep. 31.6, *Letters of Paulinus of Nola*, ii, p. 133.

121 Examples cited by Raw, *Anglo-Saxon crucifixion iconography*, p. 95.

122 Maximus of Turin, *Homilia*, 49, *De cruce domini*, 1, *PL*, 57, 339, trans. Rahner, *Greek myths and Christian mystery*, p. 383.

123 Augustine, *In iohannis evangelium*, 2:2, 3, pp. 12–13. *Instituit lignum, quo mare transeamus. Nemo enim potest transire mare huius saeculi, nisi cruce Christi portatus*: p. 12, ll 31–33. Finbarr

Like St Paul, Augustine acknowledges that people have differing capacities for spiritual understanding, but insists that both those who can already see something of Christ's immutable divinity and those 'of weaker eyesight' are to cling to this wood. Provided they 'do not depart from the cross and the Passion and resurrection of Christ', those of lesser understanding will be 'conducted in that same ship to that which they do not see' as those who do see.¹²⁴ Conversely, he cites St Paul to reprove those who have already achieved some understanding of the divine Creator through studying his creation but who, blinded by pride in their own intellect and wisdom, despise the lowliness of the cross (see Romans 1:20–2). They [81] do not realise that the crucified Christ, whom they see only dimly from afar, is God incarnate.

The argument extends to the salvation history of fallen humanity, cast out through pride far from the fatherland, whose redemption could only be effected through the humility of the crucified Christ; there is no means of passing through the waves of this world to our native land except borne by 'the wood of his humiliation'. Augustine says that if Christ had come as God, he would not have been recognised, therefore he appeared as man. By his incarnation 'he made an eye-salve to cleanse the eyes of our heart (*oculos cordis*) to enable us to see his majesty by means of his humility'. The eyes of the heart had been blinded by carnal desires. When "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us", he healed our eyes, "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). His divine glory can be seen by no one unless they are healed by the humility of his flesh. Augustine therefore reiterates 'See you do not depart from the wood by which you may cross the sea'. All the faithful are to learn from the crucified Christ, through whom humanity itself is transformed and brought at last to share in the divine life.¹²⁵

The frontispiece in the Würzburg Pauline Epistles is not a literal illustration of any of these texts but an inventive aid to meditation that might call to mind a range of such mental images, enriching a reading of the crucifixion image at various levels for those who identified themselves with the figures in the boat, taught by Christ. The Insular iconography of the crucifixion, and the visual exemplum of the contrasting responses and rewards of the two thieves, guide readers to see divine glory in the crucified Christ, who was made literally visible in human flesh. The recognition of who Christ is and the understanding of how to appropriate redemption and reign with him are linked. The cross that spans the great portal is revealed as the means by which the heavenward journey is to be accomplished. [82]

Clancy, 'The cross in Augustine's *Tractatus in Iohannem*', *Studia Patristica*, 33 (1997), pp. 55–62 at 61–62.

124 *In iohannis evangelium* 2:3, p. 12, trans. in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christian Fathers*, 1st ser., 7, pp. 14–15.

125 *In iohannis evangelium* 2:16, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christian Fathers*, 7, p. 18.

THE ST GALL GOSPELS

Art and iconography

Introduction

St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek Cod. 51 has been classified by Patrick McGurk as belonging to a group of Gospel books of the late eighth or early ninth century which are 'indisputably Irish' and share with a group of small, more personal pocket Gospel books particular features in codicology, script and text suggesting earlier traditions and local practice.¹ Their characteristics include the absence of prefatory material, even canon tables, which in other Insular gospels receive an important part of the book's decoration. The whole-page illumination focuses on the four gospel openings and usually consists of evangelist portraits, frontally posed, most often standing and sometimes with their symbols, and the ornamentation of the four gospel incipits and the opening of Matthew 1:18 (Plates 9.1–9.10).²

Other commentators draw attention to the modesty of the materials used in the St Gall Gospels, the imperfect execution of some elements in the ornament, and the obstacles to easy legibility presented by the biblical text and by the script, its multiple abbreviations and erratic punctuation. While such features raise questions about the book's intended purpose and the circumstances of its production, and may challenge modern assumptions about what constitutes an altar book, the monumental quality of the St Gall Gospels is undeniable. The impression is conveyed by the sheer mass and archaic appearance of its pages of consistent black lines of script arranged in a dense block layout, relieved throughout by touches of red and 'gold' and, most of all, by its weighty programme of illumination.

1 P. McGurk, 'The Gospel book in Celtic lands before AD 850: contents and arrangements', *Ireland and Christendom. The Bible and the Missions*, ed. P.N. Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart 1987) 165–89; 169–70; P. McGurk, 'The Irish pocket Gospel book', *Sacris Erudiri* 8 (1956) 249–70; 263–67. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek Codex 51: J. Duft and P. Meyer, *The Irish miniatures in the cathedral library of St Gall* (Berne 1960) 69–71, 87–101. C.A. Farr, 'Irish Pocket Gospels in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Anglo-Saxon Traces*, ed. J. Roberts and L. Webster (Tempe 2011) 87–100; B. Meehan, 'Irish Pocket Gospel Books', in *The St Cuthbert Gospel: Studies on the Insular Manuscript of the Gospel of John*, ed. C. Breay and B. Meehan (London 2015) 83–103.

2 A colour digital facsimile is on the e-codices website of the Stiftsbibliothek, St Gallen: www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0051. A full-colour print facsimile is forthcoming: Damian Bracken, ed., *St Gallen Codex 51* (Cork).



Plate 9.1 The St Gall Gospels. Portrait of the evangelist Matthew. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 2.



Plate 9.2 The St Gall Gospels. Matthew Incipit page. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 3.

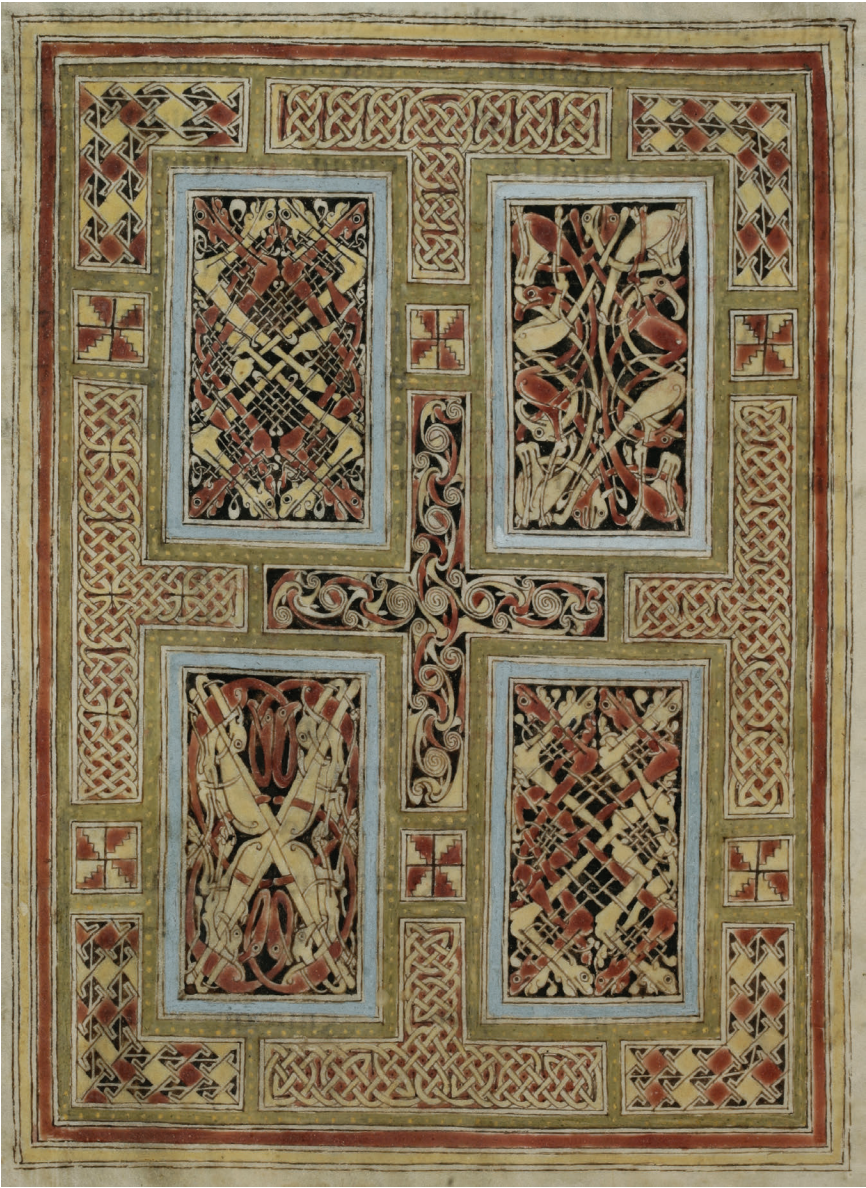


Plate 9.3 The St Gall Gospels. Carpet page. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 6.



Plate 9.4 The St Gall Gospels. *Chi-Rho* Initial page. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 7.



Plate 9.5 The St Gall Gospels. St Mark and the evangelist Symbols. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 78.



Plate 9.6 The St Gall Gospels. Mark Incipit page. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 79.



Plate 9.7 The St Gall Gospels. Portrait of the evangelist Luke. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 128.



Plate 9.8 The St Gall Gospels. Luke Incipit page. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 129.



Plate 9.9 The St Gall Gospels. Portrait of the evangelist John. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 208.



Plate 9.10 The St Gall Gospels. John Incipit page. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 209.

Twelve framed pages of images and ornamented texts, arranged in six double openings, far exceed the scale of illumination normally found in Irish pocket Gospel books, and the individual character of the entire sequence is conveyed by a distinctive restricted palette and repertoire of ornament.

The fine evangelist portraits show familiarity with a range of Insular traditions but have several innovative features. Facing the four portraits are the four respective gospel openings whose heavily outlined and immensely enlarged initial letters have robust spiral terminals, are filled with cells of geometric, zoomorphic and interlaced ornament and are followed by smaller angular display lettering on coloured panels. Both in general layout and some specific details these incipit pages, quite unlike the evangelist portraits which face them, recast and simplify the format so influentially laid down in the Lindisfarne Gospels and adapted, in differing ways, in the Lichfield Gospels and later in the ninth-century Macregol Gospels.³

Unusual elements in the illumination of other pages in St Gall also invite comparison with grand liturgical Gospel books. The practice of magnifying the abbreviated Greek form of the *nomen sacrum* at Matthew 1:18 has been described as a diagnostic feature of Insular gospel books.⁴ St Gall's *chi-rho* (*Xp*) is enlarged, framed and ornamented on the full-page scale of that in the Lichfield Gospels; the further emphasis provided by a facing carpet page (pp. 6–7, Plate 9.3, Plate 9.4) – the only carpet page in the book – finds a parallel only in the Book of Kells.⁵ The inclusion of whole-page figurative images, in addition to the evangelists and their symbols, is an outstanding feature of Kells but is otherwise rare in surviving Insular gospels, though more examples of this and other features may once have existed in manuscripts now lost or incomplete. The St Gall Gospels has two such figurative images, situated at the end of the book (pp. 266–67, Plates 9.1 and 9.2). The Crucifixion scene can be compared with only one other early Insular manuscript example of the subject, that in the Durham Gospels, and the image of Christ in glory which faces the Crucifixion in St Gall is without extant precedent.

The impression of monumentality conveyed by the illumination in the St Gall Gospels lies not in an assortment of ambitious features, however, but in their integration in a coherently conceived design which structures the book and is both visually unified and thematically rich. The following commentary describes the programme and its iconography and tries to understand what kinds of associations and significance the images might have held for those who produced and used the book. It considers the St Gall Gospels in the

3 M.P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society, spirituality and the scribe* (London 2003) 331–44, pl. 11, 17, 21, 25 for the Lindisfarne incipit pages; C.A. Farr, 'The incipit pages of the Macregol Gospels', *Making and meaning in Insular art*, ed. R. Moss (Dublin 2007) 275–87: 278–79.

4 McGurk, 'The Insular pocket Gospel book', 257–58.

5 In the original ordering of the Book of Kells the singleton carpet-page, now bound as fol. 33r, most probably faced the *chi-rho* on fol. 34r; see B. Meehan, *The Book of Kells* (London 2012) 65.

context of Insular gospel illumination, which was one of the most spectacular and characteristic products of the Insular transformation of the cultural inheritance received from the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity. Literary and visual traditions of biblical interpretation were of central importance in that late antique inheritance and may help explain the art of the Insular gospel book, but part of the Insular transformation of such traditions was the development of a distinctive relationship between form and meaning and between text, ornament and image. Figural images in Gospel books are not simply barbaric reductions of Mediterranean models; their meaning or significance cannot be separated from their style, colouring and abstract ornament as though these were subsidiary native elements or of aesthetic interest alone.⁶ The images in the St Gall Gospels will therefore be viewed together with their ornamented frames and with some reference to the adjoining display texts and to their place within the larger design of the book, though this cannot be attempted in the same detail for each example.⁷

The evangelist portraits

In the Insular gospel book tradition each of the four constituent gospels is prefaced either by an evangelist portrait, alone or accompanied by the appropriate evangelist symbol or, alternatively, by an image of the symbol alone. Such pictorial prefaces are positioned either directly opposite the gospel incipit or before the double opening formed by a carpet-page and the incipit. The great variety shown by Insular artists in depicting such a limited range of subject matter suggests the availability of a large repertoire of traditions and motifs, and considerable experiment and adaptation rather than slavish dependence on models, though certain broad categories are evident. The seated evangelist is generally depicted in a pose denoting reflection or teaching, in the tradition of late antique author and philosopher portraits, or is seen in action as a scribe.⁸ Much more rarely, he is shown standing, as in the Stowe St John, the Book of Mulling and other Irish pocket Gospels, and the portraits of Mark and John in the St Gall Gospels, pp. 78, 208 (Plate 9.5, Plate 9.9).⁹

6 See M. Schapiro, *The language of forms. Lectures on Insular manuscript art* (New York 2005); I. Henderson, 'Understanding the Figurative Style and Decorative Programme of the Book of Deer', in *Studies in the Book of Deer*, ed. K. Forsyth (Dublin 2008), 32–66 (33–37).

7 The commentary incorporates a partly revised and extended version of some material included in 'The image of orthodoxy, the *mysterium Christi* and Insular Gospel books', in *L'Irlanda e gli irlandesi nell'alto medioevo, Settimane di studio [della fondazione] del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, LVII (2010) 651–705.

8 A.M. Friend, 'The portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin manuscripts', pts. I and II, *Art Studies* (1927) 115–147, (1929) 3–29; M.P. Brown, 'Embodying exegesis: depicting the Evangelists in Insular manuscripts', *Le isole britanniche e Roma in età Romanobarbarica*, ed. É. Ó Carragáin and A.M. Luiselli Fadda (Rome 1998) 109–127: 109–117.

9 Illustrated in *Insular manuscripts 6th to 9th century*, ed. J.J.G. Alexander (London 1978): Dublin, Royal Irish Academy D.II.3, fol. 11v, cat. 47, fig. 209; Dublin, Trinity College MS A.I.15 (60), fols.

While the standing evangelist portrait tradition ultimately derived from the eastern Mediterranean, the depiction of the evangelist symbols did not.¹⁰ The four winged *animalia* seen in heavenly theophanies in Ezekiel 1:4–26 and Revelation 4:6–11 were systematically interpreted as symbols of the four evangelists by patristic exegetes. They appeared in this symbolic role, and not only as apocalyptic figures, in late antique monumental art in the Latin West, notably in Rome and Ravenna. There is surviving evidence that the symbols were combined with portraits of the evangelists in late antique Latin Gospel books, and it is likely that examples once included the unusual combination of the eastern standing type of evangelist with the western evangelist symbol placed overhead.¹¹

Full-page evangelist symbols are depicted instead of evangelist portraits before the four constituent gospels in the Book of Durrow, the Echternach Gospels and the London-Canterbury Gospels.¹² These Insular examples show the ‘terrestrial’ evangelist symbol (full-length, without wings, halo or book), an iconographic type which was very rare elsewhere in the early Latin West but was still preserved in Irish Gospel books of the twelfth century.¹³ Although the other, more common type of evangelist symbol found in the art of Late Antiquity

12v, 35v, 81v, cat.45, figs. 210–12. For other examples in Irish pocket Gospels, see London, BL Add. 40618, fol. 21v, cat. 46, fig. 213; Book of Dimma, Dublin, Trinity College MS A.23 (59), pp. 2, 54, cat. 48, figs. 222, 224; Cadmug Gospels, Fulda, Landesbibliothek Codex Bonifatianus 3, fol. 33v, cat. 49, fig. 228; Macdurnan Gospels, London, Lambeth Palace Library 1370, fols. 4v, 115v, 170v, cat. 70, figs. 326–28.

10 Editors’ note: The unequivocal statement on the origin of depictions of evangelist symbols should perhaps be qualified. No evidence exists of evangelist symbols in pre-Iconoclastic manuscripts, but some eastern monumental examples survive, most notably in the late fifth- or early sixth-century apse mosaic at Hosios David, Thessaloniki, where the four creatures – holding books with quadriform decoration on their covers – appear in an image of theophany that combines the visions in Ezekiel 1 and Book of Revelations / Apocalypse 4. See J. Snyder, ‘The meaning of the “Maestas Domini” in Hosios David’, *Byzantion* 37 (1967) 143–52; R. Jensen, ‘Of cherubim and gospel symbols’, *Biblical Archaeological Review* 21.4 (1995).

11 See L. Nees, *The Gundohinus Gospels* (Cambridge, MA 1987) 83–129, who argued that the set of standing Evangelists with their symbols overhead in the Frankish Gundohinus Gospels, c. 754, was derived from a sixth-century Ravennate model, transmitted independently of Insular influence. The four standing Evangelists had, however, appeared in Insular art earlier, in conjunction with symbols of Insular hybrid type, though in the different context of the *Maestas Domini* frontispiece to the Gospels in the Codex Amiatinus bible, produced in Wearmouth-Jarrow before 715: Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, cat.7, fig. 26. For the seventh-century Coptic encaustic painted wooden covers of the Freer Gospels, depicting two pairs of standing Evangelists holding their gospel books in front of them, and without symbols, see *In the Beginning. Bibles before the Year 1000*, ed. M.P. Brown (Washington, DC, 2006), cat. 28.

12 That is, the Gospel book now divided between London, British Library Otho C V (fol.27), and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 197B (fol.1).

13 C. Nordenfalk, ‘An illustrated Diatessaron’, *Art Bulletin* 50 (1968) 119–48; J. O’Reilly, ‘The Hiberno-Latin tradition of the evangelists and the Gospels of Mael Brigte’, *Peritia* 9 (1995) 290–309.

(half-length, with wings, and sometimes a halo and book) was known to Insular artists, a combination of features from both iconographic types was far more popular.¹⁴ It is this Insular hybrid type of a full-length winged symbol which accompanies three of the four seated evangelist portraits in the Lindisfarne Gospels and the seated portrait of Luke in both the Lichfield Gospels and the St Gall Gospels, p. 128.¹⁵

There is considerable variety within each broad category in Insular gospels and some manuscripts use more than one iconographic type. The Book of Dimma, for example, has three unaccompanied frontal evangelist portraits, one sitting and two standing, but also one full-page evangelist symbol, the eagle, which distinguishes the gospel of St John, p. 104.¹⁶ The colouring, framing ornament and decorative dotting of that page, though not its iconography, have close similarities with the St Gall Gospels.

In the St Gall Gospels there are two seated and two standing evangelists. Matthew is a compressed figure on a high-backed throne with his half-length winged symbol of the man displayed above him in frontal pose (p. 2, Plate 9.1). Luke's more elongated body is accentuated by the lower back of his throne. Above him, his symbolic calf is shown full-length, winged and in profile, his body set at an angle to accommodate the height of the evangelist's head (p. 128, Plate 9.7). Matthew is bearded; he has sometimes been described as having an elaborately piled-up hairstyle, but on closer examination it can be seen that a most unusual piece of patterned headgear completely conceals his hair and forms a clear-cut line across his brow.¹⁷ Luke is beardless and has long golden hair in two loosely knotted skeins. The two evangelists therefore express difference, but both are

14 E. Kitzinger, 'The coffin reliquary' in *The relics of St Cuthbert*, ed. C.F. Battiscombe (Oxford 1956) 228–48; *Evangelium quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis* (facsimile), 2 vols, ed. T. Kendrick, J. Brown et al. (Olten and Lausanne 1956–60) 2, 158–64, pl. 25–27; G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells. The Insular Gospel-books 650–800* (London 1987) 41–54, 73–79, 119–126; 155–57, 174–78.

15 M.P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels*, 346–70, pl. 8, 14, 18, 22, fig. 152. The figure of Matthew's symbol in Lindisfarne and St Gall is half-length, as already seen in San Vitale, Ravenna.

16 Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, cat. 48, fig. 225; Meehan, 'Irish pocket gospel books', 93–95, fig. 4.11; Françoise Henry, *Irish art in the early Christian period (to 800 AD)*, (London 1965, rev. ed.), colour pl. L. A digital colour facsimile on Trinity College Dublin, DRIS website, http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?folder_id=1659&pidtopage=MS59_001&entry_point=1

17 See notes 51 and 52. Matthew's headgear is described as 'a Coptic-style mitre' by M.P. Brown, 'Bearded sages and beautiful boys: Insular and Anglo-Saxon attitudes to the iconography of the beard', in *Listen, O Isles, unto me. Studies in Medieval Word and Image*, ed. E. Mullins and D. Scully (Cork 2011) 278–90: 283. Nevertheless, see Bede on Exodus 28:39, *De tabernaculo*, III, ed. D. Hurst, *Beda Venerabilis, Opera exegetica*, 2A, *De tabernaculo*, *De templo*, In *Ezra et Neemiam*, CCL 119A, p. 117, ll. 932–1,000; tr. Holder p. 135 and nn. 1–3 on terminology, re fine linen turban (*tiaara*), also called head-dress (*cidaris*) or mitre (*mitre*) covers and adorns the head of the high priest. Josephus explains how this turban was made, pp. 135–37. See also E. Cambridge, 'Reconsidering Cuthbert's relics' in Breay and Meehan, *The St Cuthbert Gospel*, 121.

presented as frontal figures on bar thrones of similar type. Each has a large stippled halo, they hold their gospel books in front of them with similar gestures, their stylised garments have triple dotting, banded and tubular folds and coloured outlined edges, and the same chequer-board patterning appears in the plumage of their winged symbols.

Such elements of difference and concord are emphasised by the frames. The side panels in both portraits are filled with zoomorphic interlace but of differing pattern; the upper and lower borders, each divided into two framed panels, are filled with interlace on Matthew's page, with geometric key patterns on Luke's. Neither the evangelists' heads nor their symbols protrude above the outer frame (as they do in the Book of Mulling and the Stowe St John respectively) but the rectangular picture area is ingeniously extended into the borders, just at the extremities of the central axis. The evangelists' feet and the winged symbols above their heads reach into two well-defined niches in the lower and upper frames. On Matthew's page the niche in the upper border has curved edges and that at the bottom is rectangular, an arrangement repeated in reverse on Luke's page. Luke's calf leaps up into this space, wittily pushing back the border with extended fore-legs.¹⁸

In contrast to the seated Matthew and Luke (pp. 2, 128), Mark and John are monolithic standing figures set within much narrower confines by the greater width of the side borders which frame them (pp. 78, 208). Both are frontal figures whose unnaturally proportioned bodies accentuate their massive heads. The two evangelists are of closely similar type but distinguished from each other by differences in drapery folds, hair colour and facial features; John (Plate 9.9) is clean-shaven, so that his face appears larger than the moustached and bearded face of Mark (Plate 9.5). They also differ in the treatment of their symbols and in details in the layout and ornament of their broadly complementary panelled frames. The two have often been compared to the standing evangelists in Irish pocket gospels, particularly the portraits of John in the Book of Mulling, fol. 81v, and of Luke in BL Add 40618, fol. 21v, who hold their Gospel books with similar gesture and whose garments, like those of the evangelist in the Stowe St John, fol. 11v, also have tubular folds and hemlines arranged in linear patterns.¹⁹ In the St Gall Gospels, however, the integration of the constituent parts of the design in conveying the significance of the evangelist image is more complex, as the example of John may illustrate.

Whereas Mark's portrait does not include his evangelist symbol overhead, John's portrait does. It is unusual for standing evangelists to be accompanied by

18 For discussion of the relationship of field and frame and the transformation of models in Insular gospels, see Schapiro, *The language of forms*, 129–55.

19 Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, figs. 212, 213, 209. See also Matthew's symbol in the Book of Armagh, fol. 32v, fig. 230, and the image of Christ in the Book of Kells, fol. 114. Digital colour facsimiles at Trinity College Dublin, DRIS, website: Book of Armagh http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php#folder_id=26&pidtopage=MS52_01&entry_point=60; Book of Kells http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/#folder_id=14&pidtopage=MS58_001r&entry_point=1

their symbols.²⁰ Not only did the two elements have separate iconographic origins, but their combination in a limited space could be problematic. To accommodate the eagle above the head of St John in the St Gall Gospels, the evangelist is positioned further down within the picture area than the companion figure of Mark; John's bare feet consequently just intrude on the lower border. The solution in the Stowe St John was to show the eagle with upper frontal body and profile head emerging from behind the evangelist and rising well above his head and above the upper border of the portrait; the eagle's partly opened wings frame John's head.²¹

In the portrait of John in the St Gall Gospels there is no room for the eagle to soar because the upper frame remains solidly intact, thereby preserving harmony with the frames of the other three portraits in the book. A small eagle in horizontal pose and with profile head, body and folded wing, is asymmetrically positioned above the standing evangelist, pointing in the direction of the facing incipit (Plate 9.10). One impressively clawed foot betokens the eagle's customary grandeur, the talons just connecting it with the rim of John's halo. A dry-point trial drawing in the space left in front of the eagle sketches a heavier, more imposing head and protruding beak, but such a design, if carried out, would have left the bird wedged between the two inner frames, without a hint of flight.²²

The eagle's legendary ability to look directly at the sun was commonly compared with John's distinction in being alone among the evangelists to gaze directly on Christ's divinity in the spiritual vision with which his gospel opens. John's prologue, identifying Christ with the Word or Logos, the second person of the Trinity, was a much-cited proof text of orthodox Trinitarian belief.²³ In the St Gall Gospels the presence of the eagle is sufficient to identify the evangelist at a glance, but does not distract from the focus of the whole image, the eyes of the visionary St John. His face is at the apex of a triangular arrangement of three circles. Two large circles containing concentric blue inner frames and spiral ornament are placed at the mid-point of the two side-frames. The triangle is completed by the circle of John's halo, which also has a blue inner frame, formed by the curvilinear strands of John's blue hair and extended by the curved band of blue drapery at his neck. In the Book of Kells, fol. 291v, three circular medallions are arranged in a sim-

20 Nees, *Gundohinus Gospels*, 84–120.

21 P. Harbison, *The golden age of Irish art: the medieval achievement 600–1200* (London 1998) pl. 58. See website Irish Script on Screen for full, colour digital facsimile, www.isos.dias.ie/english/index.html

22 I am grateful to Dr Joseph Flahive for bringing the dry-point drawing to my attention. The St Gall eagle has been compared with the symbol above the seated Evangelist in the later St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 60, p. 4: Alexander, *Insular manuscripts* cat. 60, fig. 284.

23 'In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God: and the Word was God [...] All things were made by him' (John 1:1, 2). See Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum*, 1.4, 7; 6, 9, ed. F. Wehrich, *Sancti Aureli Augustini De consensu evangelistarum*, CSEL 43, pp. 6–7, 9–10; *In iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV*, tr.36, 1, 5, ed. R. Willems, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV*, CCSL 36, p. 323; *De trinitate libri XV*, 1.6.9, 2.5.9, 6.2.3, ed. W.J. Mountain, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De Trinitate libri XV*, CCSL 50, 37–38, 90–93, 229–31, 381–82.

ilar triangular relationship, but positioned around the outer rim of the densely ornamented halo which frames and accentuates the face of John (Plate 7.1). In both images John's compelling stare draws the viewer to ponder the evangelist's inward spiritual gaze.

The combination of different types of evangelists and symbols in the St Gall Gospels need not be regarded as an arbitrary assortment dictated by poverty of resources or the unavailability of a complete exemplar containing just one iconographic type.²⁴ In Byzantine Gospel books, which may reflect early traditions, the depiction of the physical differences, poses and accoutrements of the four evangelists who variously announce divine revelation in Christ was one of the ways in which the common exegetical theme of the diversity and harmony of the fourfold Gospel was given pictorial expression. This is usually seen in seated evangelist portraits, but in a high-status manuscript from the eastern Mediterranean, the late sixth-century Rabbula Gospels, which uses a range of techniques to demonstrate the harmony of the gospels, there is a clear example of the four evangelists being pictured in two pairs, one pair seated and one standing.²⁵ Though they are displayed on facing folios in the canon tables, and accompany the canons which record the textual concordances of each pair, not only are the two pairs visually different, but the evangelists within each pair, especially the seated pair, are also differentiated from each other.

There is every sign that the portraits in the St Gall Gospels were not a haphazard collection but were composed as two broadly matched pairs: Matthew and Luke, Mark and John. Dispersed through the book in canonical order (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) the evangelists are thus presented as alternately seated and standing. The differences between the pairs and, on closer scrutiny, within the two pairs, are held in tension by features which link the four evangelists. All are frontally posed impassive figures with iconic gaze; each holds his Gospel book on the left arm with the same gesture of the right hand. They are intensely still; none is shown in the act of dipping a pen in ink or writing.²⁶

To such observations may be added conclusions based on close measurement of the images and the practical reconstruction of their underlying design methods,

24 Cf. M. Brown, 'Bearded sages', p. 283: St Gall Gospels 'piece together evangelist miniatures inspired by various earlier sources to form its cycle'.

25 Florence, Laurentian Library, cod. Plut. I, 56, fols. 9v–10: C. Nordenfalk, *Die spätantiken Kanontafeln* (Göteborg 1938) pl. 43; K. Weitzmann, *Late antique and early Christian book illumination* (New York 1977) pl. 35. See the full digital facsimile on the Laurentian Library's TECA Digitale website. <http://teca.bmlonline.it/ImageViewer/servlet/ImageViewer?idr=TECA0000025956#page/38/mode/1up>

26 As appears occasionally even in the pocket Gospels tradition of standing Evangelists: the Book of Mulling, fol. 12v (Matthew); the Macdurnan Gospels, fol. 170v (John). See Lambeth Palace Library, www.lambethpalacelibrary.org/macdurnangospels; and Trinity College Dublin, Digital Collections, for digital colour facsimile, Book of Mulling: http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?folder_id=1648&pidtopage=MS60_001&entry_point=1

which are those characteristically used in Insular gospel book illumination. The work of Robert Stevick has demonstrated that, although the pictures of the two pairs of evangelists in the St Gall Gospels suggest iconographic models from very different sources, the frames of Insular ornament were not designed to fit around some pre-selected shapes, nor were they designed to match the space of the text rulings. Rather, the frames of the portraits and the linked proportions and positioning of all the elements within them proceed from a conception which is 'rooted in geometry' and makes use of the proportional measure known as the golden section, by which the individual parts are harmoniously related to the whole.²⁷

Each framed portrait, moreover, is augmented by the complementary colouring and ornament of the framed incipit facing it. There are also particular links between the image and text pages. On the *Liber generationis* page, for example (Plate 9.2), the function of the disembodied vertical red dotted line positioned between the left-hand border and the extended letter 'I' of *Liber* is to echo the slim red upright of Matthew's throne aligned with it on the facing page. The incipit pages of Mark and John begin with *INItium* and *IN PRincipio* (Plate 9.6, Plate 9.10) respectively and in both of them the initial capital, I, is coupled in Insular fashion with the first upright of the next capital, N, so that these columnar letter forms, constituting the whole of the left-hand border of the page, emphasise the vertical form of the standing evangelist on the facing page. In the case of the portrait of John, these letter forms also complement the coupled pillars of panelled ornament in the side borders which flank him.

The sequence of four gospel openings is brought to a climax with the incipit of John. Though made to be complementary to the other three incipits in terms of the dotted framing, restricted palette and general design of the rectilinear panelled shafts and spiral terminals of the initials, it is also distinguished by its considerably larger size and inclusion of variant and additional geometric motifs, precisely executed. They magnify the concentration of interlace and other abstract ornament already present in the borders which surround the facing portrait of John the evangelist, visually suggesting something of his particular spiritual aura and power. Alone among the four incipit pages, the ornamented initials are followed in majuscule by the whole of the first verse of the gospel, in which John recognises Christ as the Word, the divine Logos: *IN PRincipio erat uerbum et uerbum erat apud dm and ds erat uerbum*.

It can be seen that multiple techniques were used in the presentation of the double openings of the four gospels as a varied but unified sequence. The significance of this pronounced feature of the book will be explored further in the course of considering in more detail the exegetical context and iconography of two of the gospel openings, those of Matthew and Mark, and the ways in which the visual rhetoric of the openings may serve a theological purpose.

27 R. Stevick, 'A geometer's art: the full-page illuminations in St Gallen Stiftsbibliothek Cod. Sang. 51, an Insular Gospels book of the VIIIth century', *Scriptorium* 44 (1990) 161–92: 162, 164.

**St Matthew and his symbol; the genealogy of Christ;
the carpet-page and the *chi-rho* (pp. 2–7)**

The symbol of Matthew

As there are no prefaces in the St Gall Gospels, the book opens directly with the first evangelist portrait and the facing incipit of Matthew's gospel (pp. 2–3, Plate 9.1, Plate 9.2). Where full-length symbols are shown above the heads of a set of evangelist portraits, Matthew's awkwardly tall symbol of the man might be depicted as a half-length figure, usually in profile or three-quarter view, as in the Lindisfarne Gospels. But the half-length symbol above Matthew in the St Gall Gospels is an uncompromisingly frontal figure and probably derives from a different iconographic tradition. There is some broad comparison of its pose and positioning on a vertical axis above the evangelist's head in the stylistically different, classicising Insular Codex Aureus. Matthew is there enthroned beneath an arch which contains his symbol, shown as a large frontal half-length figure with outspread wings, who makes a gesture of benediction familiar in Mediterranean art: the third finger of the right hand forms a circle with the thumb and the remaining three fingers are raised.²⁸

Matthew's portrait in the St Gall Gospels has no such architectural setting, though the top rail of the throne forms a lintel above his head. Frontally positioned and placed directly over the evangelist, the large, winged and half-length symbol of the man does not offer a conventional blessing derived from the world of Late Antiquity but brings his hands together in an arcane sign, the thumbs upraised and their tips meeting at a steep angle, the fingers pointing downwards and diagonally interwoven. Not only do the hands make a rhomboid shape, but a perfect lozenge is formed at the centre of the pattern of stylised interwoven fingers. On the same page, and level with this gesture, the lozenge shape is again formed by the crossed necks and bodies of two quadrupeds in the interlace of the right border. Like the sign of the cross and the X-shaped Greek letter *chi*, the lozenge is an abstract motif made up of four elements, used in late antique art but adapted with great variety in Insular ornament.²⁹ All three motifs – cross, *chi* and lozenge – could serve as cosmological and Christological symbols, whether prominently displayed or concealed within the ornament. As an ancient image of the *tetragnus mundi*, the lozenge could, in a Christian context, particularly signify Christ as

28 Stockholm, Royal Lib., A.135, fol. 9v, 150v; Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, cat. 30, figs. 153, 147; Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon painting*, pl. 36, 37. The first two fingers traditionally signify the human and divine natures of Christ and the whole gesture the unity of his Person and the oneness of the Trinity.

29 H. Richardson, 'Number and symbol in early Christian Irish art', *Journal of Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 114 (1984) 1–30. J. O'Reilly, 'Gospel harmony and the names of Christ. Insular images of a patristic theme', *The Bible as book. The manuscript tradition*, ed. J.L. Sharpe III and K. van Kampen (London 1998) 73–88: 74–79.

the divine Creator. The formation of this sign in the hands of Matthew's symbol of the man, who among the evangelist symbols traditionally represents Christ's humanity and Incarnation, therefore points to the paradox of the identity of Christ in a particularly Insular manner.

The evangelist symbol's interwoven fingers may have had the same sort of function as that of the two facing recumbent lions with interwoven fore-legs, who are positioned on top of the initial 'L' on the *Liber generationis* page in the Book of Kells (Plate 3.5). Their protruding tongues are crossed to form a calligraphic *chi*. This curious small detail at the beginning of the genealogy visually anticipates the greatly enlarged letter *chi* which follows the genealogy and opens the account of the Incarnation at Matthew 1:18 with the abbreviated title of Christ, the Greek form of the Hebrew title Messiah ('the Anointed'): *Xpi (Christi) autem generatio*.³⁰ The lions' crossed tongues in Kells can be seen as a sign pointing to the fulfilment in the Incarnation of what was prophesied and prefigured throughout all the generations of Christ's human ancestors. In the Book of Kells, as in the St Gall Gospels, a clear lozenge is formed at the crossing of the framed diagonals of the initial X-shaped letter *chi* of Christ's name, emphasising the identification of the incarnate Christ with the divine Creator. The small lozenge concealed in the interlaced fingers of Matthew's symbol in St Gall at the outset of the genealogy similarly signals the revelation of divine providence in the evangelist's account of the Incarnation at Matthew 1:18.

The genealogy of Christ and the chi-rho

While the opening of Matthew 1:18 may have once formed the beginning of a lection for the Vigil of the Nativity in some ancient lection system, Patrick McGurk has argued that it is one of a number of gospel passages highlighted in Insular gospel books which 'do not seem to have had merely liturgical significance'.³¹ The unparalleled magnificence of the *chi-rho* page in the Book of

30 On *Christus* as one of the names of the Son of God, see Isidore, *Etymologiae* 7.2.2, ed. W.M. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX* (Oxford 1911), vol. 1, trans. A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006) 155.

31 P. McGurk, 'Two notes on the Book of Kells and its relation to other Insular Gospel books', *Scriptorium* 9 (1955) 105–107:106. The minor initials in the St Gall Gospels include some of these frequently marked texts, for example: *Tunc dicit illis his vos scandalum* (Matthew 26:31, p. 68), *Vespere autem sabbati* (Matthew 28:1, p. 76), *Fuit in diebus* (Luke 1:5, p. 130), *Una autem sabbati* (Luke 24:1, p. 203). [Editors' note: For the possible liturgical importance of some of these passages in the Book of Kells and other early Latin gospel manuscripts, see Carol A. Farr, 'The sign at the crossroads: the Matthean *Nomen sacrum* in Anglo-Saxon gospel books before Alfred the Great' in *Form and Order in the Anglo-Saxon World, AD 600–1100*, Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 16, ed. S. Crawford and H. Hamerow with L. Webster (Oxford 2009) 79–88, especially p. 84; eadem, 'The Lindisfarne Gospels and Performative Voice of Gospel Manuscripts' in *The Lindisfarne Gospels: new perspectives*, ed. R. Gameson (Brill: Leiden) 129–51; eadem, *The*

Kells, whose numerous figural and other motifs provide additional aids to its interpretation, has received much discussion in the light of patristic traditions on the sacred name, the cosmological cross, and the identity of the Logos-Creator with the incarnate and crucified Christ (Plate 1.6).³² Such exegetical traditions were not the peculiar inheritance of Insular Christianity, however, and the characteristically Insular practice of magnifying and ornamenting Christ's title at Matthew 1:18, often on the scale of a Gospel *incipit* (as in St Gall), cannot be fully understood without reference to Insular traditions of interpreting the genealogy which precedes it.³³

The design of the display capitals and panelled lettering in Matthew's *incipit* in St Gall is close to the format established in the corresponding page of the Lindisfarne Gospels, fol. 27, but goes further in the Insular process of devoting increasing space to fewer words on the page. It displays only *Liber generationis ih[u]*, followed overleaf by the rest of the title, *xpi filii David, filii Abraham*, and the names of Christ's human ancestors recorded in Matthew 1:1–17, all written in the majuscule script of the main gospel text but in a most unusual layout. The genealogy in Luke, which does not appear until after Christ's baptism (Luke 3:23–38), traces the ancestral names backwards to Adam with a simple 'qui fuit' linking son back to father (*qui fuit Iacob, qui fuit Isaac, qui fuit Abrahæ*); this brief formula is aligned in orderly columns in Insular manuscripts, whether they are of the *cola et commata* or block layout tradition. In the St Gall Gospels the entire Lucan genealogy fits on one page in three sets of abbreviated three-word columns, with the continuation text (Luke 4:1–4) completing a narrow fourth column (p. 140).

The genealogy in Matthew does not lend itself to such easy tabulation, for in tracing names forward through time (*Abraham genuit Isaac, Isaac autem genuit Iacob*) it often supplies additional items of information. Insular artists therefore used a columnar layout for only parts of the text or devised a different means of highlighting its importance. Among those using a block text layout the Book of Durrow emphasises the initials of the progenitors with a dotted outline, the Lichfield and Macregol Gospels frame each page of the genealogy and in Kells it is written as a continuous piece of text with little regard for word division, and is set out in two columns over four pages, the Old Testament names prophetically

Book of Kells: Its Function and Audience (London, 1997), pp. 116–18, 148, 150, 152, 160; *eadem*, *Lection and interpretation: the liturgical and exegetical background of the illustrations in the Book of Kells*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1989, 270–87, 296–305, 334–35, 337–40, 345–48].

32 O.K. Werckmeister, *Irisch-northumbrische Buchmalerei des 8. Jahrhunderts und monastische Spiritualität* (Berlin 1967) 147–70; S. Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy: the *chi-rho* page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio* 36 (1980) 139–59.

33 McGurk, 'The Gospel book in Celtic lands', 167–68; J. O'Reilly, 'Gospel harmony and the names of Christ. Insular images of a patristic theme', *The Bible as book. The manuscript tradition*, ed. J.L. Sharpe III and K. van Kampen (London 1998) 73–88:74–79; Farr, 'Sign at the Crossroads', 82–86.

undergirded by the outline of cruciform frames with a lozenge at their centre.³⁴ In the St Gall Gospels the genealogy in Matthew, though containing only forty-two generations rather than the seventy-seven in Luke, occupies two whole pages (pp. 4–5). The list of generations, and even the final summary of their groupings and three epochs, beginning *Omnes itaque generationes ab Abraham usque David*, is written out across each page in horizontal lines but with words arbitrarily divided or incomprehensibly merged to form six narrow vertical columns of letters, separated by red space-fillers, with the effect that it appears as an alien and mysterious text.

The genealogy is presented as a complete entity, beginning with the illuminated incipit *Liber generationi ihu*, which forms its title, and ending at Matthew 1:17 with the added emphasis, *finit*, and a colophon.³⁵ It is emphatically separated from the next words in the gospel text by the elaborate carpet page which faces Matthew 1:18 (pp. 6–7, Plates 9.3 and 9.4). The separation is marked in a variety of ways in other Insular books which also treat Matthew 1:18 as the second opening of Matthew's gospel. In the Lindisfarne Gospels and Cutbercht Gospels, the *chi-rho* page even carries the rubric *Incipit evangelium secundum mattheum*.³⁶ In the Cutbercht Gospels the portrait of Matthew, fol. 17v, is postponed until after the genealogy and the *chi-rho* appears still later at fol. 22, after the canon tables; in the Macdurnan Gospels the genealogy is separated from the framed *chi-rho* on fol. 5 by the intervening evangelist portrait of Matthew on fol. 4v.³⁷

Patristic commentators expounded the Christological concord underlying the numerous differences in the literal texts of the royal and priestly genealogies set out by Matthew and Luke respectively.³⁸ But the genealogy in Matthew was also of exegetical importance in its own right because of its fundamental opening position in the first gospel and its function there in summarising providential history and announcing the Incarnation as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.³⁹

34 F. Henry, *The Book of Kells* (London 1974), pls 24, 25; Meehan, *Book of Kells*, pl. 43. Colour digital facsimile at Trinity College Dublin, DRIS website: http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS_ID=MS58_003v#searchresu. A recent reinterpretation by Benjamin C. Tilghman, 'Ornament and Incarnation in Insular Art', *Gesta* 55.2 (Fall 2016) 157–77.

35 *finit. do. quantum queo gratias ago meo* (p. 5). At the end of the *Liber generationis* the scribe appends a thanksgiving for spiritual graces more usually found, like requests for prayers, at the end of a complete gospel text, as at the end of Matthew in the Cadmug pocket Gospels, fol. 18v: *do. gratias ago finit hunc librum*. See the digital facsimile, Hochschul- und Landesbibliothek, Fulda, <http://fuldig.hs-fulda.de/viewer/resolver?urn=urn:nbn:de:hebis:66:fuldig-2615402>

36 Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, figs. 44, 183.

37 Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, pl. 181, 183; 322, 326.

38 Eusebius records the early letter of Julius Africanus to Aristides on the subject, *The history of the Church*, 1.6, 7, tr. G.A. Williamson (Harmondsworth 1965, rev. 1989) 20–22; see especially Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 2.1–13, ed. Weihrich, *CSEL* 43, 81–94.

39 Irish commentators preserved the tradition, evident in Origen, Jerome and Isidore, of linking the forty-two *mansiones* or camp-sites of the Israelites during the Exodus journey to the Promised Land, which was seen as a figure of humanity's long spiritual ascent to the heavenly promised land, with the forty-two generations of the Matthean genealogy revealing Christ's descent to earth

Hiberno-Latin commentaries noted that, just as the *Liber genesis* describes creation, so Matthew's *Liber generationis* describes re-creation. It was also compared with the *Liber generationis* of the first Adam (Genesis 5:1) and further glossed by identification with other scriptural instances of the word 'liber', such as the psalm text interpreted in the New Testament as prophetic of Christ's coming and his sacrificial redemption of humanity: 'At the head of the book, it is written of me'.⁴⁰

The account of Christ's calling of Matthew in the first gospel was harmonised by Jerome and other commentators with the accounts in Mark and Luke of the calling of Levi, son of Alpheus, who sat at the receipt of custom.⁴¹ Matthew's listing of the Hebrew names of Christ's ancestors had a particular authority and interest for Irish commentators who had greatly elaborated patristic practice in the use of etymologies to expound the sacred meaning believed to be concealed in Hebrew words in scripture. Such interests are also reflected in ancillary texts in Insular gospel books. A selective glossary of Hebrew names used in the gospels, which is not simply derived from Jerome's *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominis*, appears as a distinctive prefatory text in some Insular gospel books (including Durrow, Kells and the Durham Gospels).⁴² The so-called Monarchian prefaces describe Matthew as being 'of the Jews' and closely identify his gospel with its opening account of the descent of Christ from Abraham and David, to which an arcane mystical meaning is ascribed. An Irish text family of the prefaces survives in the Book of Armagh and in several Insular gospel books, including the Books of Durrow, Kells and Mulling.⁴³

Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah; his gospel is heavy with Old Testament prophecies and parallels and features Christ's extended spiritual interpretation of the Law (Matthew 5–7). Origen's commentary on Matthew's gospel, as cited by Eusebius, noted that Matthew wrote for Hebrew converts who had

at the Incarnation as the means by which human redemption was accomplished: *The Reference Bible, Das Bibelwerk inter Pauca problemsmata de enigmatibus ex tomis canonicis. Praefatio et libri de pentateucho Moysis*, ed. Gerard MacGinty, CCCM 173, 196–204.

40 *In capite libri scriptum est de me*, Psalms 39:7–9, Hebrews 10:5–14. See, for example, the *Moralis explanatio* of the genealogy by Ailerán, *Interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi*, ed. A. Breen (Dublin 1995) 35, line 517.

41 Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27; Jerome in the *Plures fuisse* speaks of 'Matthew the publican surnamed Levi'.

42 P. McGurk, 'The texts at the opening of the book', in *The Book of Kells*, ed. P. Fox, facsimile commentary volume, (Lucerne 1990) 37–59: 47–52 and 'An edition of the abbreviated and selective set of Hebrew names found in the Book of Kells', in *Gospel Books and Early Latin Manuscripts*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), which gives *errata* for his earlier studies; O. Szerwiniack. 'Des recueils d'interprétations de noms hébreux chez les irlandais et le wisigoth Theodulf', *Scriptorium* 48 (1994) 187–258 and 'Des recueils d'interprétations de noms hébreux (suite)', *Scriptorium* 50 (1996) 117–22; E. Mullins, 'The Irish Hebrew name lists in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, lat. 940', *Scriptorium* 57 (2003) 227–37.

43 J. Regul, *Die antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe* (Freiburg 1966) 21–22, 58–59; McGurk, 'The texts at the opening of the book', 41.

believed that the Messiah would come from the line of Abraham and David; Matthew therefore wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, unlike the other evangelists.⁴⁴ The tradition was attested by Augustine in *De consensu evangelistarum*.⁴⁵ It was repeatedly used by Jerome, who was particularly revered by Irish commentators as a biblical scholar and translator of the Hebrew scriptures. In *De viris illustribus*, 3, Jerome stated that Matthew's Hebrew gospel survived in his own day, in the library at Caesarea. He explained that when Matthew quoted the Old Testament in his gospel, he did so directly from the Hebrew text, not from the Septuagint.

The belief that Matthew wrote the first gospel, and wrote in Hebrew, also appears in contexts directly relevant to Insular gospel books. It is repeated, for example in the *Novum opus*, Jerome's dedication of his revision of the Old Latin Gospels, which features among the prefatory texts of numerous Insular gospels and is the only general preface (apart from the canon tables) in some of them, notably the Book of Durrow, and was probably so in the Book of Kells.⁴⁶ The preface to Jerome's standard commentary on Matthew's gospel states that the first evangelist, Matthew, wrote in Hebrew in Judea principally for Jewish believers in Christ, who still clung to the shadow of the law. Jerome's commentary was much used by Irish commentators, who expounded Matthew more often than the other three gospels; its *praefatio* circulated as a prefatory text, *Plures fuisse*, in some Insular gospel books, including the Lindisfarne Gospels.⁴⁷ It was also influential for Hiberno-Latin commentators in their practice of prefacing commentaries on Matthew and on the four Gospels with exegesis on all four evangelists and their symbols. In a significant departure from patristic custom, some also commented on the prefatory texts of Gospel books, including Jerome's prefaces.⁴⁸ Isidore of Seville had further transmitted the tradition that Matthew was the first of the evangelists to

44 Eusebius, *The history of the Church*, 3.24; 5.8; 6.25. Eusebius notes that Matthew 'had begun by preaching to Hebrews; and when he made up his mind to go to others too, he committed his own gospel to writing in his native tongue, so that for those with whom he was no longer present the gap left by his departure was filled by what he wrote' (HE 3.24, p. 86). Eusebius also recalls the tradition that the apostle Bartholomew had preached in India and had left behind Matthew's account 'in the actual Hebrew characters'; it was preserved until the time of the eastern mission of Pantaenus of Alexandria (HE 5.10). Eusebius notes that Origen said in his Commentary on Matthew that the first gospel to be written was that of Matthew, 'the one-time excise man who became an apostle of Jesus Christ', and that his gospel was for believers of Jewish origin and was composed in Aramaic, Eusebius HE 6.25, p. 201. Eusebius also cited Ireneus, *De Adversus Her*. 3: 'Matthew published a written gospel for the Hebrews in their own tongue' – HE 5.8, p. 154.

45 Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 1.2.4; ed. Wehrich, CSEL 43, 3–5.

46 *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. R. Weber (Stuttgart 1983) 1515–16; McGurk, 'Gospel book in Celtic lands', 170–77.

47 Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, ed. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, CCSL 77, 1–4; Gospel books with this preface are listed in P. McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books from A.D. 400 to A.D. 800* (Paris 1961) 110–11.

48 Elizabeth Mullins, 'The Insular reception of the Eusebian canon tables: exegesis and iconography', unpublished doctoral thesis, University College Cork 2001, 103–46.

write, that he wrote in Judaea in Hebrew, in Hebrew characters, and began his Gospel by showing that Christ was bodily descended from the seed of the patriarchs, as foretold by the prophets.⁴⁹ Matthew's Hebrew authorship was, then, very familiar to Irish commentators from a variety of sources; it is several times mentioned in the compilation known as the Irish Reference Bible, for example.⁵⁰

Such traditions may illuminate a unique iconographic puzzle posed in the St Gall Gospels, where the image of Matthew is positioned facing the words *Liber generationis ihu* at the head of the book. It is possible that Matthew's exotic headgear serves as a visual allusion to the well-known Hebrew associations of the first evangelist and to his gospel's opening revelation of the significance of the Hebrew names, which are so cryptically inscribed in the St Gall Gospels.⁵¹ The centred point of his headgear is emphasised by its vertical alignment with the peaked head of Matthew's symbol above and the pointed gesture of his thumbs in forming the Christological lozenge sign, already discussed.⁵²

49 *Etymologiae* 6.2.35, Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* 1, and *De ortu et obitu patrum*, PL 83.176A, ed. C.C. Gómez, *Isidorus Hispalensis De ortu et obitu partum* (Paris 1985), p. 211.

50 Paris, Bibl. Nat.ms. lat. 11561, fols. 129, 130; See the black-and-white digitised facsimile on the BnF's website Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90668240/f132.item.r=lat>

51 The headgear, possibly derived from a Byzantine source, is quite different from the high priestly plate seen on the forehead of the scribe in the frontispiece of the Codex Amiatinus and is to be distinguished from the turban-like headcloth worn by Bishop Erhard in the Uta Codex, fol. 4, in allusion to the Aaronite priesthood: Adam S. Cohen, *The Uta Codex. Art, philosophy and reform in eleventh-century Germany* (Pennsylvania 2000) 85, pl. 5. There are other Insular examples of unusual iconography in Matthew's portrait, in the Lindisfarne Gospels, fol. 25v (G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, 119–124) and in the Garland of Howth, fol. 1v and the Book of Deer, fol. 4v (I. Henderson, 'Understanding the figurative style and decorative programme of the Book of Deer', *Studies in the Book of Deer*, ed. K. Forsyth (Dublin 2008) 32–66: 44–48, figs. 2.5, 6). See note 16 on Matthew's headgear in St Gall 51.

52 The account of Christ's calling of Matthew (Matthew 9:9) was harmonised with the calling of Levi, son of Alpheus, who sat at the receipt of custom (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). It seems unlikely, however, that Matthew's exotic headgear in the St Gall portrait simply denotes his status as a local official; the detail is not presented as a narrative detail and Matthew's role as the Hebrew Evangelist is much more heavily stressed in tradition and exegesis, as noted here. Bede, Homily 1.21, ed. D. Hurst, *Beda Venerabilis Homiliarum evangelii Libri II*, CCSL 122, 1–399, p. 154, tr. L.T. Martin and D. Hurst, *Bede the Venerable Homilies on the Gospels, Book One Advent to Lent* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1991) p. 213, emphasises in Matthew the Lord's words: 'I have not come to call the just but sinners to repentance'. Bede, p. 212: 'the Lord fetched Matthew, whom he chose out of his publican activities in order to increase for sinners their hope of forgiveness. The apostolic band into which he was incorporated teaches what kind of person he became. The nation of the Ethiopians teaches [this] too. By his preaching he converted [this] nation from the farthest ends of the earth to the fellowship of holy Church, and in the font of baptism he restored them from swartheness to beauty. For he removed the blackness of their vices, and adorned them with a covering of virtues. His own gospel teaches this. By writing it he sanctified the beginning of the New Testament. To him it was granted by special privilege to be the first of all to describe what happened, and to transmit for believers to read the mysteries of the Lord's incarnation, which all the prophets for ages past foretold would come to be. He composed [his] gospel in the Hebrew language, to build

There are examples in other Insular manuscripts of symbolic features or attributes in an evangelist portrait which reflect something of the character of the gospel, as epitomised in its opening, most notably in a manuscript which shares various features of design and motif with the St Gall Gospels. In the Lichfield Gospels, p. 218, Luke is enthroned beneath his evangelist symbol, the calf which, as a sacrificial victim, traditionally referred to Christ's priesthood and his Passion. Luke holds the budding rod of Aaron (Numbers 17:8) and the sceptre of the cross, in allusion to his gospel's opening scene of Zacharias as the last of the Old Testament priestly line of Aaron and associated temple sacrifices which prefigured Christ, the new High Priest and sacrificial offering. A large lozenge shape is formed by the upward diagonals of the two crossed sceptres and by the splayed front and hind legs of the sacrificial calf overhead. Two locks of Luke's hair are diagonally crossed to form a distinct *chi* at the centre of his forehead and are surmounted by a small golden object, almost concealed by its likeness to the stylised strands of his hair, which may allude to the golden plate worn by the High Priest (Exodus 28:36).⁵³

It is likely that the practical function of biblical genealogies in establishing family and tribal origins and identity, authenticating office and providing a framework for the recording of history would have been appreciated by early Irish churchmen, whose own large corpus of genealogical material exhibits some of the same concerns.⁵⁴ The enumeration of Hebrew names in the Matthean genealogy of Christ, however, was already of theological importance to patristic writers in the Roman world and, in giving the genealogy lengthier and more arcane exposition, Hiberno-Latin commentators drew on a wide range of exegetical, onomastic and scriptural sources. Ailerán of Clonard (d.665), for example, densely expounded the *interpretatio mystica* of the Hebrew names of Christ's ancestors through their etymologies, and the scriptural texts which these explanations suggested, in order to reveal various facets of Christ and the work of redemption. In the *moralia explanatio* he shows how the faithful should imitate the various aspects of Christ thus revealed.⁵⁵ Commentaries on the genealogy pay great attention to its opening words, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham', which also open the first gospel and the whole Gospel book, and they expound the two sacred names of its title, *ihu xpi*, to reveal the humanity and divinity of Christ.⁵⁶ The *Liber generationis*, mystically interpreted, was regarded

up the faith of the primitive Church which was gathered mostly from the Hebrew people' (Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 3).

53 Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, fig. 82; Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, 122–24.

54 D. Ó Corráin, 'Creating the past: the early Irish genealogical tradition', *Carroll Lecture* 1992, *Peritia* 12 (1998) 177–208.

55 Breen, *Ailerani interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi*, 17–35, 81–162.

56 Irish Reference Bible, Paris, BnF, ms. Lat. 11561: Matthean genealogy fols. 137v–140, sacred names fol. 138; O'Reilly, 'Gospel harmony and the names of Christ in Insular gospel books', 77–78. See Gallica, as in note 50, for digital facsimile of BnF lat. 11561.

as a book encapsulating the entire gospel, and this exegetical practice finds a counter-part in the lay-out of the St Gall Gospels and other Irish Gospel books where the genealogy, Matthew 1:1–17, is treated as a unit separated from the next verse of Matthew's text. Continental books marked for Roman lections treat *Christi autem generatio sic erat* as the conclusion of the genealogy and begin the account of the incarnation with the next words (the second part of verse 18), *Cum esset desponsata mater eius Maria Ioseph*.⁵⁷

Commentators explained that Matthew's list of Christ's ancestors is traced from Abraham onwards because God's promise to Abraham that he should be the father of many nations (Genesis 12:2–3), though literally fulfilled in the birth of his son Isaac, was spiritually fulfilled in Christ and the universal Church (Galatians 3:8, 16).⁵⁸ The list of ancestors ends abruptly with Joseph. Commentators stressed that Mary, from whom Christ took his humanity, was of the same Davidic line as Joseph and that she assumed Joseph's lineage at their espousal, but the account of her virginal conception and the birth of Christ, which immediately follows the human genealogy in Matthew's text, dramatically reveals Christ's divine sonship.

The Gospel accounts of Christ's human and divine descent had long been harmonised in patristic exegesis. In the third canon of the Eusebian tables, for example, the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are shown to be in spiritual concord not only with each other but with the very different literal text of verses from the opening of John 1:1–5, 9, 14.⁵⁹ A lengthy Hiberno-Latin commentary on the Matthean genealogy adapts early patristic practice, which had been much elaborated by Augustine, and quotes John 1:14, *Et uerbum caro factum est*, to identify the Christ of the human genealogy and Incarnation described by Matthew with the divine Word or Creator-Logos described by John.⁶⁰ The necessity of both the human and divine natures of Christ in bringing about human salvation is repeatedly made in exegesis through allusion to the cross. A similar linking may be visually suggested in some Insular gospel books. In the Book of Durrow, for example, a small cross is placed over the illuminated *chi* of Christ's name at Matthew 1:18 and over the opening of John's gospel, 'In the beginning was the Word'.

57 C.A. Farr, 'Liturgical influences on the decoration of the Book of Kells', *Studies in Insular art and archaeology*, ed. C. Karkov and R. Farrell, *American Early Medieval Studies*, 1 (1991) 127–141:129; eadem, 'The sign at the crossroads', 82–85. See also Bede, *Homelia* 1.5 on the lection Matthew 1:18 (b)-25 for the vigil of Christmas, *Opera homiletica*, ed. D. Hurst, *CCSL* 122, 32; trs. Martin and Hurst, 1: 44–45.

58 Isaac's son Jacob had twelve sons who became the eponymous founders of the twelve tribes of Israel.

59 Matthew 1:1–17, Luke 3:23–38, John 1:1–5, 9, 14.

60 Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 6233, fols. 7v–31v: fols. 31–32; B. Bischoff, 'Turning-points in the history of Latin exegesis in the early Irish church AD 650–800', *Biblical studies: the medieval Irish contribution*, ed. M. McNamara (Dublin 1976) 74–160, cat. 23. See digital facsimile online, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Digitale Bibliothek, http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/bsb00054475/image_5

In the Harburg Gospels two small crosses appear above the initial capitals of *In principio*, like the cross which forms the shaft of the small upright *chi-rho* beside the initial of the *Liber generationis*.⁶¹

The cross-carpet page and the chi-rho

Isidore records the patristic commonplace that the Latin letter X, which stands for ten, signifies the cross by its shape (*crux decussata*) and that the name of Christ is written by using the letter which makes the sign of the cross.⁶² In the St Gall Gospels, as in the Lichfield Gospels, the letter *chi* at Matthew 1:18 is enlarged to span the full depth of the page (Plate 9.4). It is of similar shape to that in Lichfield and similarly includes two-coloured discs among its terminal spiral decoration. But quite unlike the examples in the Lindisfarne and Lichfield Gospels, the letter *chi* in St Gall is edged with a heavy dotted border and is filled with panelled ornament. At the centre of the *chi*, the crossed diagonals form a lozenge-shaped panel, which is divided into four and coloured so as to reveal a small cross whose arms have a partly stepped outline. This particular form of diagonal cross, which is a distinctive feature in the ornament of the manuscript, may simultaneously be read as a *chi*.⁶³ The combination of all three quadripartite Christological symbols at the crossing point – the *chi*, cross and lozenge – otherwise appears only in the Book of Kells.

The *chi-rho* page in St Gall is further emphasised by the elaborate sign of the cross which appears in the facing carpet page (Plate 9.3). This recalls the practice of some Insular gospels in pairing a cross-carpet page and a gospel incipit, as in the Lindisfarne and Lichfield Gospels, but the only extant examples of the provision of such a double opening at Matthew 1:18 are the St Gall Gospels and, probably, the Book of Kells. The two facing pages in the St Gall Gospels are closely complementary in their ornament and red and 'gold' colouring, with touches of blue, but the large asymmetrical sweeping curves of the *chi* and the areas of bare vellum surrounding the accompanying panelled text, *autem generatio*, contrast with the densely packed and centred design of the carpet page.

In the carpet page (p. 6) the tensions set up by potentially discordant elements of symmetry and asymmetry and by variously shaped panels of diverse geometric, spiral, interlaced and animal ornament, are resolved in the eye of the beholder. The same continuous dotted band which forms the innermost element

61 Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, cat. 6, pl.19; cat. 24, pl. 120, 123.

62 Isidore, *Etymologiae* 1.3.11; 1.4.14, ed. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* 1; trs. Barney and Lewis, *The Etymologies*, 40, 41; Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy', 142–44.

63 The stepped cross motif also appears on the shaft of the *chi*, the carpet page, on three incipits and the Crucifixion page. It is normally formed within an upright square or rectangle, which is quartered, with each of the quarters diagonally divided by a stepped line. The resulting eight broadly triangular shapes radiating from the centre of the square and suggesting rotation, are in two alternating colours. The four triangular shapes in the stronger colour can be read as forming both a *chi* and a cross.

of the narrow framing border extends inwards to frame each of the component rectilinear panels of ornament as well. The design is also unified by the strongly fourfold nature of the composition. It is worth itemising these various quaternities. The framed panels of ornament around the four sides project inwards at the four cardinal points, forming a cross-shaped frame. At its centre a small cross is delineated, filled with spiral ornament. It appears to be equilateral, an illusion sustained by the implied movement of the spirals. The four arms of this central cross are linked to the cardinal points of the frame by four T-shaped panels of golden interlace (as in the four-symbols page before Mark's gospel in the Book of Kells and the four-symbols page prefacing the Macdurnan Gospels). The four corners of the carpet page are emphasised with right-angled panels, all in the same colouring and containing the same rectilinear ornament, but with differences of pattern.

In the angles of the central cross are four large rectangular panels, united by their equal size and blue inner frames and all filled with zoomorphic ornament of the same colouring, but interlaced in different patterns. The animal ornament has some similarities with that in the cross-carpet page before Luke in the Lichfield Gospels, p. 220, particularly in the pose of the quadrupeds, with the long-clawed fore-leg drawn up parallel to the extended neck and chin.⁶⁴ On the St Gall carpet page each of the four large rectangular panels contains four pairs of interlaced creatures displayed against a black background. There are correspondences between the two pairs of diagonally opposed panels: one pair is filled with birds, the other with quadrupeds and their angular interlacing forms four clear lozenge shapes. There are also asymmetrical links between the lateral pair of panels, the interlaced quadrupeds and birds in the upper and lower panels on the left, for example, forming strong lozenge and *chi*-shaped patterns respectively.

There is one telling exception to this multiple fourfold patterning, namely a set of six small square frames, each divided and coloured to form a cross of the stepped *chi*-cross type which is also seen at the centre and on the shaft of the great *chi* on the facing *chi-rho* page. On the carpet page these small, square-framed crosses are equilateral. Their positioning helps minimise the effect of the difference between the height and breadth of the design, whose vertical rectangular shape is determined by the shape of the page. The two vertical parts of the central cross are a little longer than its two horizontal arms, just as the parts of the T-shaped panels and the corner panels which are positioned in the side borders are necessarily longer than their counterparts in the shorter top and bottom borders.

The only set of fourfold ornament whose components are both symmetrical in shape and identical in size are the four large rectangular panels around the cross which, unlike the T-panels and corner panels, do not form part of the border. The

64 S. Marx, 'Studies in Insular animal ornament in late 7th- and 8th-century manuscripts', *From the isles of the North: Early medieval art in Ireland and Britain*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Belfast 1995) 105–10, fig. 1; S. Marx, 'The miserable beasts: animal art in the Gospels of Lindisfarne, Lichfield and St Gallen 51', *Peritia* 9 (1995) 234–45.

six little square-framed crosses are distributed between each of the two pairs of rectangular zoomorphic panels and between each of those four panels and the side frames of the design. The square-framed crosses thus form two horizontal rows right across the design and magnify the impression of its width. It is less immediately apparent that the same square-framed crosses also usefully act as buffers between each of the remaining *vertical* components of the design, spacing them out a little. This means that the vertical parts of the four T-shaped panels and the four corner pieces and the vertical shaft of the central cross have not themselves had to be increased in length beyond what is compatible with preserving an overall sense of fourfold harmony.

It is with considerable ingenuity, therefore, that such diverse and asymmetrical elements are brought into a unified design made up of quadripartite sets of panels, each set of different shape and ornament, and each set placed either around the four arms of the centred cross, at its four cardinal points or at the four corners of the cruciform frame. Without recourse to these particularities, Robert Stevick has shown how the extremely varied rectangular page designs in the St Gall Gospels 'all evolve their forms from the geometrical properties implicit in a square'. He describes the square as 'a perfect form', evolved from the circle and the cross, which are also 'signs of perfection in themselves'. He concludes that, apart from any symbolism these underlying shapes may carry, the aesthetic result of the geometrical methods of creating the underlying structure of the design is 'a binding of all the elements of the page in an equilibrium of proportional relations'.⁶⁵

The embodiment of measure and proportion, and of diversity and harmony, in abstract fourfold designs at key points in the sacred text of Insular gospel books, however, is not only aesthetically satisfying but spiritually powerful. Such a design did not offer a didactic aid, a narrative illustration or a visual translation of specific patristic texts, but could wordlessly express fundamental cosmological concepts which had long been assimilated into Christian thought and late Roman art. For an initiated viewer the design could present a Christological image.

Early patristic commentators were familiar with Pythagorean ideas of a fourfold ordering of time, space and matter (such as the four seasons, cardinal directions and elements), reflecting a diverse but ordered cosmos.⁶⁶ This view of creation, which was closely identified with the harmony of numbers and geometric forms, was seen to accord with biblical descriptions of the wisdom of the divine Creator who 'ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight' (Wisdom 11:21).⁶⁷ The text was influentially used by Augustine in his commentary on John's Gospel, whose opening evokes the account of Creation in Genesis and identifies the incarnate Christ as the Creator-Logos 'by whom all things were made' (John 1:3); Augustine observed that nothing that can have weight, number

65 Stevick, 'The geometer's art', 162, 192.

66 G. Ladner, *God, cosmos, and humankind: the world of early Christian symbolism* (Berkeley 1995) 80–88, 99–116.

67 Cf. Proverbs 8: 22–29; Isaiah 40:12; Job 28:20–28, 38:4–7.

or measure exists, except by that Creator-Word.⁶⁸ An early Irish computistical text, *De computo dialogus*, quotes Isidore's use of Wisdom 11:21 to explain the importance of *ratio numerorum* in revealing the mystery contained in many passages of Scripture.⁶⁹

The same Pythagorean world view had influenced the early Christian identification of the cross with the *chi*-shaped structure of the cosmos.⁷⁰ The cosmological *chi*-cross was used by early exegetes as an image of Christ the Creator-Logos, who renewed creation and restored fallen humanity by taking on human flesh, stretching out his hands on the cross, and drawing all things to himself.⁷¹ Insular commentators were familiar with the patristic association of the four projections of the cross, seen as penetrating all creation from its centre and also as converging on the centre from north, south, east and west, with the four dimensions listed by St Paul, the 'breadth and length and height and depth' of the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:18).⁷² The image of the cross as spanning heaven and earth was further related to the immensely influential New Testament text, used in the liturgy of Holy Week, which acclaims the paradoxical exaltation of Christ through his humble submission in taking on human likeness and even death on the cross, and the consequent confession of his name and recognition of his glory by all things 'in heaven, on earth and under the earth' (Philippians 2:6–11). Christ's fulfilment of the divine plan of redemption on the fourfold cross was described as 'bringing together in harmonious and concordant unity the diverse natures of existing things'.⁷³ Exegetes emphasised that the

68 Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium*, Tr. 1, 1, ed. Willems, *CCSL* 36, p. 1; Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* 2.4.7, ed. R.A.B. Mynors *Cassiodori Senatoris Institutiones* (Oxford 1937) 141:1–7; Isidore, *Etymologiae* 3.4.1, ed. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* 1, trs. Barney and Lewis, *The Etymologies*, 90; F. Wallis, 'Images of order in the medieval computus', *Ideas of Order in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Ginsberg (Binghampton 1990) 45–67; J. McEvoy, 'Biblical and Platonic measure', *Eriugena*, ed. B. McGinn and W. Otten (Notre Dame and London 1994) 153–77.

69 PL 90, 647, cited by F. Wallis, *Bede: the reckoning of time* (Liverpool 1999) xxiii.

70 G. Ladner, 'St Gregory of Nyssa and St Augustine on the symbolism of the Cross', in *Late classical and medieval studies in honour of Albert Mathias Friend*, ed. K. Weitzmann (Princeton 1955) 88–95; H. Rahner, *Greek myths and Christian mystery* (London 1963) 46–68.

71 Commonly cited texts include: John 1:14; 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1: 15–20.

72 A parallel often used by Augustine, for example, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.41.62, ed. R.P.H. Green (Oxford 1995) 128–29; *In Iohannis evangelium*, tr. 118.5: 657, ed. Willems, *CCSL* 36, p. 657. See F.G. Clancy, 'The Cross in Augustine's *Tractatus in Iohannem*', *Studia Patristica* 33 (1997) 55–62; 60 and J. Cavadini, 'Images of the cross in St Augustine', *The cross in Christian tradition. From Paul to Bonaventure*, ed. E.A. Dreyer (New York 2000) 147–68:15. The tradition is preserved in the pseudo-Jerome, *Commentarius in evangelium secundum Marcum*, 15, PL 30, 638A; *Tractatus Hilarii in septem epistolas canonicas*, ed. R.E. McNally, *Scriptores Hiberniae minores*, Pars 1, *CCSL* 108B, 85–86.

73 Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica (magna)* 32, trans. Henry Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers* (Oxford 1970) 147–48, links Ephesians 3:18 and Phil 2:10.

quadriform sign of the cross is inscribed on all creation, sometimes very visibly, sometimes in hidden form.⁷⁴

The concealment of cross shapes in the interstices of ornament, particularly interlace, is a well-known design feature of late antique and Insular art.⁷⁵ The strongly quadripartite plan and unusual arithmetical construction which Stevick identified in the centred cross-carpet page before John's gospel in the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Harburg Gospels (where it is the only carpet page in the book) may particularly allude to the fourfold measure of the divine Creator.⁷⁶ Similarly, the cosmological cross and quaternities of abstract and animal ornament featured in the solitary carpet page in the St Gall Gospels and positioned opposite the *chi-rho*, may symbolically identify the incarnate Christ announced at Matthew 1:18 with the divine Creator. Four small crosses are hidden in the interlace of the T-shaped panel on the left of the carpet page in the St Gall Gospels. Their form is repeated in the solitary cross disclosed in a panel of interlace at the top of John's incipit which contains the whole of the first verse of his gospel, acclaiming Christ as the divine Word (p. 209, Plate 9.10).

St Mark and the four evangelist symbols

Alone among the evangelists in the St Gall Gospels, and unusually among the standing evangelists of the Insular pocket-Gospel tradition, Mark is profusely bearded, like a prophet; the tendrils cross to form two curved *chi* shapes (p. 78, Plate 9.5). His gospel opens with the citation of Old Testament prophecies of John the Baptist, the last of the prophets to prepare the way of the Lord.⁷⁷ As seen in the case of Matthew, the gospel openings were regarded as epitomising the distinctive witness of each gospel. The other evangelists at some point in their gospels also quote Isaiah's prophecy of the *vox clamantis in deserto* (Isa 40:3) – it is the first instance of the concordance of all four gospels listed in the first Eusebian canon table – but only Mark's gospel begins with the prophetic voice.⁷⁸ This is characterised in the Irish Reference Bible's listing of the four kinds of rule represented by

74 H. Rahner, *Greek myths and Christian mystery* (London 1963) 46–68; Werkmeister, *Irisch-northumbrische Buchmalerei*, 125–29.

75 R.B.K. Stevenson, 'Aspects of ambiguity in crosses and interlace', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 44 (1981) 1–27: 1, 12–16.

76 R. Stevick, 'The harmonic plan of the Harburg Gospels', *Artibus et Historiae* 23 (1991) 39–51; E. Pirotte, 'Hidden order, order revealed: new light on carpet pages' in *Pattern and Purpose in Insular art*, ed. M. Redknapp, N. Edwards et al. (Oxford 2001) 203–207: 204; colour plates XVIII and XIX juxtapose the cross-carpet pages of the Harburg Gospels (Augsburg, Cod. I, 2.4.2), fol. 126v, and the St Gall Gospels, p. 6.

77 Mark says, 'as it is written in Isaiah the prophet', though first citing Malachi 3:1, then Isaiah 40:3 (Mark 1:2–3).

78 See also, Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum*, 2.12, 25; ed. Wehrich, *CSEL* 43, pp. 122–30. The prophetic character of Mark is already noted in Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.8.

the four evangelists: *Marcus regulam tenens prophetiae. In primis prophetarum ponit testimonium*.⁷⁹

The portraits of Matthew, Luke and John in the St Gall Gospels show each accompanied by his own particular winged symbol. In a composition which has no parallel in Insular manuscript art, Mark alone is shown without his own symbol overhead but with all four evangelist symbols disposed in the four corner panels of the frame. The ordering of the symbols is also unusual: the eagle and man are shown to left and right respectively at the top of the page, the lion and calf below.⁸⁰ All, including Matthew's symbol, are full-length and winged; the eagle alone is haloed. Its profile head, scrolled wing joint, huge clawed feet with pronounced spur, and tail pinions on which it is partly balanced are paralleled in the eagle in the four-symbols page in the Book of Armagh and in the canon tables of the Book of Kells, fol. 4r.⁸¹ In St Gall the upright lion and calf are quite unlike the thin-waisted profile type normally seen in Insular gospels. They are shown not as zooanthropomorphic symbols, but as stylised quadrupeds with spiral-patterned wing joints, who stand on their hind legs, each with its forelegs crossed to form a distinct *chi*. In so far as the symbols are winged, upright, full-length and of the same size, filling four equal rectangular frames disposed around a centre, they bear comparison with the four-symbols page in the Macdurnan pocket Gospels, where the symbols are arranged in the same pairs as in St Gall but horizontally reversed, so that they read: man/eagle at the top, calf/lion below. Some of the features of Macdurnan page recur on the Soiscéal Molaise book shrine.⁸²

But the Mark portrait page in the St Gall Gospels is not satisfactorily explained by the suggestion that it is simply an economical substitute for a full four-symbols page.⁸³ A four-symbols page normally functions as a visual

79 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale ms lat. 11561, fol. 134; also in other texts including, *Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in euangelia excerpta*, in Munich, Clm. 6235, fols. 32v–33v: *Scriptores Hiberniae minores* I, ed. Robert E. McNally, CCSL 108B, 213–19, 215, line 58: *Marcus scripsit secundum regulam prophetiae*. Digital facsimiles of the manuscripts in Gallica, as in note 50, and Digitale Bibliothek, <http://daten.digitalle-sammlungen.de/~db/0002/bsb00022463/images/index.html?id=00022463&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=78>

80 The symbols are arranged with man/eagle at the top, lion/calf below, in the Book of Durrow, fol. 2, Codex Amiatinus, fol. 796v, Alexander, *Insular manuscripts* pl. 13, 2. More usually, they are shown with man/lion at the top, calf/eagle at the bottom, e.g., St Cuthbert's coffin reliquary, Lichfield Gospels, p. 219, Trier Gospels, fol. 1v, Book of Armagh, fol. 32v, Book of Kells, fols. 27v, 129v (Alexander, fig. 5, pl. 81, 114, 230, 246, 250) and the Soiscéal Molaise book shrine, Harbison, *Golden age of Irish art*, pl. 141. This scheme, but with man and lion reversed, is on the Insular-influenced four-symbols page in Cracow MS 140 (43), fol. 100v: M. Krasnodedska-D'Aughton, 'The four-symbols page in Cracow Cathedral Library MS 140: an image of unity', *Peritia* 14 (2000) 323–41: 326, fig. 1.

81 F. Henry, *Irish art during the Viking invasions (800–1020)* (London 1967), figs. 18, 19

82 P. Mullarkey, 'The figural iconography of the Soiscéal Molaise and Stowe Missal book shrines', *Making and meaning in Insular art*, 50–69: 50–56, figs. 1–3.

83 Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period*, 2nd. ed. (London 1965) 197.

preface, either at the opening of the Gospel book (as in the Book of Durrow and the Macdurnan Gospels) or before each of the constituent gospels (as in the Book of Kells and, probably, in the Lichfield Gospels), its purpose being to proclaim the underlying harmony and therefore the authority of the four gospels whose diverse testimonies are about to unfold. The point is emphasised in the Trier Gospels (Plate 4.1), for the four-symbols page which opens the manuscript faces the prefatory text *Plures fuisse*, containing a detailed discussion of the fourfold nature of the Gospel, the four evangelists, their symbols and other biblical tetrads (fols. 1v–2).⁸⁴

There is some broad visual parallel in the Book of Armagh, fol. 32v, where a four-symbols page takes the place of a separate symbol page for Matthew and directly faces Matthew's incipit, *Liber generationis*. Each of the remaining three gospel openings is accompanied by the evangelist symbol appropriate to it; the calf and eagle have the heads of the other symbols depicted on their wings, suggesting the harmony of their witness.⁸⁵ In the unprefaced Macdurnan pocket Gospels a four-symbols page opens the book and again faces the *Liber generationis*, fols. 1v–2r, though in this case does not replace the portrait of Matthew, which is re-positioned at the end of the genealogy to face the *chi-rho*, indicating the second opening of the first gospel (fols. 4v–5r).⁸⁶ On the rare occasions therefore, when a four-symbols page prefaces just one of the four gospels, it occurs before Matthew.

There are also examples outside the context of the four-symbols page where the figure of Matthew or his symbol, the man, is associated with partial representations of the remaining three symbols, denoting the harmony of Matthew with the other three gospels. The evangelist figure facing Matthew's incipit in the Book of Kells, fol. 28v, for example, is seated on a throne which is ornamented with the heads of a pair of lions, a calf and an eagle (Plate 3.4).⁸⁷ Opposite the prefatory text *Novum opus* in the Trier Gospels, fol. 5v, the names of the four evangelists are inscribed around a bizarre figure of a man who has the limbs of the lion, calf and eagle suspended from his waist, probably in allusion to the tetramorphic nature of the beasts described in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:5–7).⁸⁸ The St Gall portrait of St Mark, where all four symbols are given equal weight in a scheme which emphasises their quaternity, clearly differs from such experiments. In this respect, it is conceptually closer to the Echternach Gospels, where the fourfold nature of

84 N. Netzer, *Cultural interplay in the eighth century. The Trier Gospels and the making of a scriptorium at Echternach* (Cambridge 1994) pl. 1–2.

85 Alexander, pl. 230, 226.

86 Alexander, pl. 325, 321, 322, 326. Matthew, Luke and John are shown as closely matched standing frontal figures without symbols, in the pocket Gospels tradition, and Mark alone is shown seated, fol. 70v, with an unpanelled frame of continuous ornament and with a winged symbol overhead, Alexander, pl. 326–28, 354.

87 Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, pl. 24.

88 In allusion to Ezekiel's vision of the four tetramorphic beasts: Netzer, *Cultural interplay*, pl. 3–4.

the Gospel is recalled in abstract form on two of the individual symbol pages. Four plain squares are displayed in the four corners around the *imago leonis* of Mark's symbol page and the *imago hominis* of Matthew's symbol page is seated at the centre of four square interlaced terminals, projecting inwards from the cardinal points of the frame.⁸⁹ The standing portrait of Mark and the four figural symbols in the St Gall Gospels is visually closer, however, to the rare image of Christ himself standing surrounded by the four evangelist symbols.⁹⁰

The centrality of the portrait of the evangelist to the design in the St Gall Gospels distinguishes it from a four-symbols page structured around a cross. Given the un-prefaced format of the St Gall Gospels, the depiction of a conventional four-symbols page on the outer leaf, before the appearance of the Matthew portrait at the first opening, would hardly have been practical and the substitution of a cross-symbols page for the Matthew portrait would have totally disrupted the unified character of the four gospel openings which, it has been argued here, is such a marked feature of the book. The Mark portrait page is innovative in incorporating the four evangelist symbols, yet preserves the measured order established by the alternating sequence of two pairs of evangelists. The individual differences between and within the two pairs of seated and standing evangelists, like the controlled play on differences within and between the sets of quadripartite ornament in their frames, visually express the theme of diversity within unity. The four corner panels of stylised evangelist symbols in Mark's portrait page, unified by the dimensions and colouring of their inner frames, may be seen as variant components in this larger scheme.

The question to be asked is whether any particular significance can be attached to the choice of Mark's portrait for the manuscript's unique display of the fourfold nature of the Gospel in figural rather than abstract form?⁹¹ Like the portraits of Luke and John, Mark is depicted on the verso of the last page of the previous gospel. The closing verses of Matthew describe the last of Christ's post-Resurrection appearances in the flesh before the Ascension, his final command to the disciples to go and 'teach all peoples, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the

89 Fol. 18v, fol. 75v: Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon painting*, col. pl. 9, 10.

90 On the lid of St Cuthbert's coffin, the standing Christ is shown with two symbols above him (man and lion), and two below (calf and lion). They are full-length, winged and haloed, with books, all in profile, except Matthew's frontal symbol. In searching for possible Mediterranean models Ernst Kitzinger noted that one of the characteristics of *Maiestas Domini* iconography is that Christ is shown *seated*, but he argued for the possibility of an early variant form where a frame separated the central standing figure of Christ and 'four satellite panels for the symbols': Kitzinger, 'The coffin-reliquary', 228–248: 245–48. A later example, the eleventh-century continental cover of the Anglo-Saxon Gospels of Judith of Flanders (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 709) shows Christ standing with book and a gesture of blessing, in a mandorla, with the four symbols in the four corners of the rectangular design.

91 An abstract allusion to the fourfold nature of Mark's Gospel is to be found perhaps in the four equal squares in the corners of the frame in the portrait of Mark's evangelist symbol on fol. 75v of the Echternach Gospels, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). MS lat. 9389. Digital facsimile available at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b530193948>.

Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you', and finally the assurance of his continuing presence with them, 'Behold, I am with you to the end of the world' (Matthew 28:17–20).⁹² Mark was regarded as the close attendant and epitomiser of Matthew and his gospel closes with an account of Christ's final words to his disciples, including the command to preach the Gospel to all, *Euntes in mundum universum praedicate evangelium omni creaturae* (Mark 16:15) which broadly parallels Matthew's *Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes* (Matthew 28: 19). But the setting and lapidary wording of the whole passage in Matthew's gospel, and its unique addition, *baptizantes eos in nomine patris, et filii, et spiritus sancti, docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis*, meant that it became a particularly authoritative directive on the evangelising and universal nature of the Church and on the faith taught by the Gospel.

As the only New Testament text with the Trinitarian baptismal formula, the Matthew passage was an important proof-text in early Christological controversies. In the rite of baptism described in the Gelasian sacramentary, the Bobbio Missal, and the eclectic Irish Stowe Missal of c. 800, for example, the blessing over the font quotes the liturgical formula of Christ's command to his disciples: 'Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19).⁹³ It was also cited in a wide variety of contexts as an abbreviated confession of the Gospel faith taken by the apostles and their successors to the four corners of the world, in obedience to Christ's command (Matthew 28:20).⁹⁴ The conversion of the islands at the ends of the earth, and especially of the Irish and Anglo-Saxons from beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire, was often presented as a particular fulfilment of this dominical command.

The account of Christ's words at the end of Matthew's gospel is usually marked with a minor initial at *Undecim* (Matthew 28:16) in Insular gospel books, as in the St Gall Gospels, p. 77, where the final line of text, *omnibus diebus, usque ad consummationem saeculi*, is written below the last ruled line of the page in small, abbreviated yet widely spaced minuscule. The significance of this feature, viewed in isolation, is difficult to determine as the use of minuscule is a not uncommon

92 *Et videntes eum adoraverunt: quidam autem dubitaverunt. Et accedens Iesus locutus est eis, dicens: Data est mihi omnis potestas in caelo et in terra: euntes ergo docete omnes gentes: baptizantes eos in nomine patris et filii, et spiritus sancti: docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis: et ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus, usque ad consummationem saeculi* (Matthew 28:17–20).

93 Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS D.II.3, fols. 53, 56v: *The Stowe Missal*, 2, ed. G.F. Warner, Henry Bradshaw Society 32 (repr. Woodbridge, 1989) 28, 30.

94 Rufinus, *Expositio symboli apostolorum*, 39, PL 21, 376. The first of Columbanus's *Instructiones* urges that all who wish to be saved must believe in God, who is one in substance, three in character, as all Scripture bears witness. The law teaches that 'the Lord thy God is one' (Deuteronomy 6:4) and in the Gospel the Saviour taught that the one God is a Trinity, with the words: 'Go now and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. *Sermo* 1.2, ed. G.S.M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, 2 (Dublin, 1970), pp. 60–61, ll. 20–22; cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 6.19.45, ed. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* 1, trs. Barney and Lewis, *The Etymologies*, 149.

practice at the ends of pages or texts in manuscripts of block lay-out. Overleaf, the profile heads of three of the evangelist symbols look right, towards the facing incipit of Mark's gospel, but the symbol of Matthew is alone shown with the head turned almost full-face, the eyes prominently looking back.

All or part of Matthew's ending is highlighted, and in a variety of ways, in a number of other Insular gospel books. The practice is already established in the earliest extant illuminated Insular manuscript, Durham Cathedral Library, MS A. II. 10, fol. 3v, where the entire passage, Matthew 28:16–20, is written in a well-spaced calligraphic minuscule, clearly distinguishing it from the preceding text in majuscule (Plate 5.1).⁹⁵ Three differing examples are of particular interest in considering the possible significance of the depiction of the four evangelist symbols on the verso of Matthew's ending in the St Gall Gospels. The text of Matthew 28:17–20 occupies an ornately framed page in the Durham Gospels, fol. 38, and is arranged within the quadripartite space formed by the four short inward projections of the frame from its cardinal points (Figure 5.1). The rectangular outer edge of the frame exactly matches that of the Crucifixion image on the verso, which presents a remarkable visual distillation, supplemented by extensive marginal inscriptions, of the Gospel faith given to the disciples and handed on to all the faithful at baptism.⁹⁶

In the Book of Kells the closing verses of Matthew are marked with a highlighted initial at *Undecim* at Matthew 28:16 on fol. 128v and continue, with a change of script, down to the bottom of the page. It is possible that a whole-page presentation of the ending, at least as elaborate as the chiasmic arrangement of the text at the end of Mark, was once planned, but what is in place has been generally overlooked. The concluding verses, Matthew 28:18b–20, are supplied on a few lines ruled at the top of the facing page, fol. 129r, with red dots outlining the first word of the command, *Euntes docete omnes gentes* and a final change of script. Shining through the text from the verso of this folio is the cross-symbols design which prefaces Mark's gospel. The ending of Matthew and the rubric below it introducing Mark's gospel (*secundum marcum*) are laid out on fol. 129r, not to correspond with the ruled dimensions of the facing text block, but to fit within the outline of the inner frame of the four-symbols design visible from overleaf.

Finally, in the different context of the smallest Irish pocket Gospel book, the eighth-century Cadmug Gospels, the crossed diagonals on fol. 18v which divide the text of the last page of Matthew's gospel into four segments are inscribed with the colophon, the names *mattheus*, *marcus*, *lucas*, *iohannis*, and lines on the four evangelists and their symbols from the prologue to the *Historia evangelia* of

95 Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon painting*, pl. 1.

96 Durham Cathedral Library, MS A.II.17, fol. 38, George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, 58, fig 70; O'Reilly, 'Know who and what he is', 305–6, 310–16; *eadem*, 'Image of Orthodoxy', 663–82; *eadem*, 'Seeing the crucified Christ: image and meaning in early Irish manuscript art' in *Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the early medieval West*, ed. Juliet Mullins, Jennifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Richard Hawtree (Dublin, 2013) 57–64.

Juvencus.⁹⁷ The verses are continued on the facing page, fol. 19, on the verso of which is the standing portrait of Mark.⁹⁸

It seems possible, therefore, that in the St Gall Gospels the importance of Christ's command at the end of Matthew's gospel to teach and baptise all peoples is reflected in the depiction of the four evangelist symbols overleaf. The Matthean text was frequently cited in a variety of contexts to allude to the revelation of Christ in the fourfold Gospel, taken by the apostles to the four corners of the earth in obedience to his command. The image referred not only to the Church's historical mission of primary conversion, however, for a rich exegetical tradition demonstrated the continuing doctrinal, ecclesial and spiritual significance of Christ's command for all the faithful. The tradition offers some insight into the kind of associations that might have been prompted for informed contemporaries by the image of the evangelist Mark in the St Gall Gospels and, it will be argued later, might also be relevant to an understanding of the role of the apostles in the book's final image.

At the close of Book I of his influential *De consensu evangelistarum* Augustine countered the argument that the four gospels lack authority because of their differences and because they were not written by Christ. Augustine argued that, as Christ stands to his followers in the relation of the head to the members of his body, all that he wished to give the faithful concerning his own sayings and deeds, 'he commanded to be written by those disciples, whom he used as if they were his own hands', and who were in one accord in the discharge of their diverse tasks under him, their head. Augustine acclaimed Christ as 'the one Mediator between God and man' (1 Timothy 2:5), who had reconciled man to God precisely because he was himself both God and man. Augustine showed the necessary connection between the union of the divine and human natures in Christ's person and the unity of the head and members of Christ's body, the

97 The verses appear in two other Irish books, the Macdurnan Gospels and in the Macregol Gospels, on the final page of the book, fol. 169v. The names of the four evangelists and the appropriate verses are inscribed in four framed compartments, with the colophon below. [Editors' note: The poem on the evangelists from the prologue of the *Historia evangelica* of Juvencus is not written in an Insular script in the Macdurnan Gospels and is probably a sixteenth-century addition. It should be noted also that the poem is not Juvencus's composition. On both these points, see Farr, 'Irish pocket gospels in Anglo-Saxon England', 92, 93].

98 McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books*, p. 67 cat 68; Helen McKee, *The Cambridge Juvencus Manuscript Glossed in Latin, Old Welsh and Old Irish* (Aberystwyth, 2000); R.P.H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament* (Oxford, 2006), p. 15, for transcription of the verses, which continue, with repetitions, at the end of Mark and Luke. Mark is assigned the lion in the Vulgate order of pairing generally used in Insular gospel books, but in the Old Latin order associated with Irenaeus and surviving in the Juvencus verses, John is symbolised by the lion and Mark by the eagle, as in the symbols pages of the Vulgate Durrow Gospels, fols. 16, 17. There was a further pairing, advocated by Augustine in *De consensu evangelistarum* 1.6, 9 [ed. Weihrich, *CSEL* 43, 9–10] and by Bede, and cited in the Irish Reference Bible alongside the Vulgate ordering, which assigned the lion to Matthew, as the author of the royal genealogy, and the man to Mark, the abbreviator of Matthew.

Church. He called on the faithful to see that unity demonstrated in the harmony of the four evangelists.⁹⁹

Similarly, the four symbols of the evangelists carried great theological and spiritual weight in patristic exegesis. Like other commentators from the time of Irenaeus, Gregory the Great interpreted the four winged *animalia* in the opening vision of Ezekiel as multi-faceted symbols of the four evangelists, but further extended their range of allusion as an image for the contemplation of the mystery of Christ, 'the one Mediator between God and man', and its meaning for those who would follow Christ.¹⁰⁰ In a memorable image Gregory observed that, because the evangelists are members of the body of Christ, then Christ may also be signified in the four evangelist symbols, 'For the only-begotten son of God himself truly became man; he deigned to die like an ox as sacrifice for our salvation; he, through the virtue of his fortitude, rose as a lion [. . .] ascending to heaven after his resurrection, he was borne aloft to the heights like an eagle'.¹⁰¹ Further expounding Mark's symbol as an image of the resurrection, and therefore of the two natures of Christ, Gregory used the tradition that the lion sleeps with its eyes open, 'because, in the same death in which, through his humanity, our Redeemer could sleep, through his immortal divinity he kept vigil'.¹⁰² In the homilies on Ezekiel's vision Gregory applied the image of the four evangelist symbols to Christ and to the four evangelists, but also, through a moral and spiritual exposition, to all the faithful members of Christ's body who strive to be like him and learn perfection through the four gospels.¹⁰³

Gregory's description of how Christ 'became a man by being born, an ox in dying, a lion in rising again, and an eagle in ascending to the heavens', appears in the *Moralia* with a citation of the New Testament vision of the four winged creatures (Apocalypse 4:7).¹⁰⁴ Drawing on the four symbols' traditional allusion to the gospel witness of Matthew and Luke, Mark and John respectively, to the

99 *De consensu evangelistarum*, Bk I, 35, 53–54, ed. Wehrich, *CSEL* 43, 58–61; PL 34, 1069–1070.

100 *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, I, 8.20–21, ed. M. Adriaen, *Gregorius Magnus Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, *CCSL* 142, p. 112, ll. 421–24; *Homilies of Gregory the Great on Ezekiel*, trans. T. Gray (Erna 1990) 86–87.

101 *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, I, 4.1, ed. Adriaen, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, *CCSL* 142, p. 47.

102 Ibidem. *Leo etiam apertis oculis dormire perhibetur, quia in ipsa morte in qua ex humanitate Redemptor noster dormire potuit, ex divinitate sua immortalis permanendo vigilavit*. Isidore reported that even when lions are sleeping, their eyes are watchful, *Etymologiae* 12.2, 5, ed. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* 2, trs. Barney and Lewis, 251; the Fathers had applied the Physiologus tradition to Christ at his death, because he was the lion of Judah, of whom it is prophetically said, 'Resting he slept like a lion, and like a lion's whelp. Who shall wake him?' (Genesis 49:9): see, for example, Rufinus, *Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum*, PL 21, col. 363.

103 *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, I, 4 ed. Adriaen, *CCSL* 142, 1: 47–48.

104 *Homo ergo nascendo, uitululus moriendo, leo resurgendo, aquila ad caelos ascendo uocatus est: Moralia in Iob*, 31.94, ed. M. Adriaen, *Moralia in Iob, Libri XXIII–XXXV*, *CCSL* 143B, p. 1615, ll. 44–51.

Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, it is a summary of the whole work of redemption through Christ.

In the vision of Ezekiel the four *animalia* are tetramorphic: each has the face of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle (Ezekiel 1: 6, 10), unlike their counterparts in the apocalyptic vision of St John where the first creature is described as like a lion, the second like a calf, the third has the face of a man, and the fourth is like a flying eagle (Apocalypse 4:7). By iconographic convention they were depicted as four different creatures but there was an understanding, expressed, for example, by Ambrose in the preface to his commentary on the gospel of Luke, that although each of the four symbolic creatures represents the particular characteristic of one of the four gospels, the four aspects of Christ separately represented by the four *animalia* are also present in each of the four gospels, so that 'All are but one, and the Lord is all and in all' (Colossians 3:11; Ephesians 4:6); 'Christ does not vary from one gospel to another, but is truly himself in all'.¹⁰⁵ This patristic concept was applied to Mark's gospel, the shortest of the four, in *Praefacio secundum Marcum*, a probably eighth-century text in Munich, Clm. 6235. It notes that Matthew and Luke trace Christ's human descent and John his heavenly descent, but Mark briefly comprehends all in the opening words of his gospel, *Initium euangelii Iesu Christi, filii Dei*, that is, the earthly (*Iesu Christi*) and the heavenly (*Dei*).¹⁰⁶

The influence of patristic traditions appears within the listing of quaternities associated with the four evangelists and their symbols which prefaces the *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum* by the Pseudo-Jerome: *Dominus Iesus Christus totum implevit, homo nascendo, vitulus immolando, leo surgendo, aquila ascendendo*.¹⁰⁷ But the Gregorian theme was also adapted for a commentary on a single gospel, the probably seventh-century *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, which was similarly ascribed to Jerome and was influential on Hiberno-Latin commentators. In the preface the characteristics of each of the four symbols, usually related to the corresponding evangelists, are applied to just one evangelist, Mark, *qui fremit, ut leo; qui volat, ut aquila; qui dicit, ut homo; qui immolat, ut sacerdos*. The image of all four symbols is similarly used to describe Christ, of whom Mark speaks: *Christus etenim de quo loquitur, homo nascendo, vitulus moriendo, leo surgendo, aquila est ascendendo*.¹⁰⁸

105 Ambrose, *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*, Prologus 8, ed. M. Adriaen, *Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Opera 4: Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam, Fragmenta in Esaiam*, CCSL 14, pp. 5–6; trans. Íde Ni Riain, *Commentary of St Ambrose on the Gospel according to St Luke* (Dublin 2001) 4–5.

106 *Sed in breue haec omnia comprehendit*: Munich, Clm. 6235, fols. 48v–49v, *Scriptores Hiberniae Minores*, ed. Robert E. McNally, CCSL 108B, 220–24, 221. See facsimile, Digitale Bibliothek, as in note 79.

107 PL 30.534; the Irish 'Reference Bible', Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 11561, fol. 134, links the symbols with the four stages of redemption: *Ihu xpo qui homo propter incarnationem, leo propter resurrectionem et fortitudinem crucis, vitulus propter oblationem, aquile propter ascensione*. See digital facsimile, as in note 50.

108 *Expositio euangelii secundum Marcum*, ed. M. Cahill, CCSL 82, 2–3.

Ernst Kitzinger persuasively argued that the numinous power of the figure of Mark in the St Gall Gospels was augmented by the frame. He was not discussing the evangelist symbols at all but the panels of interlace, a form of ornament which might, in certain situations, be seen as having an apotropaic function. He observed that by surrounding the evangelist with interlace and interlacing animal ornament, the Insular artist, coming from a more deeply rooted tradition of conveying spiritual force in visual terms, had intensified the potency of iconic images received from Mediterranean lands.¹⁰⁹ Abstract ornament had long been assimilated into the context of Insular gospel books, however, and it seems likely that, for contemporary viewers of the St Gall Gospels, an important part of the potency of Mark's portrait would arise from their perception of particular significance in the motifs and patterns of the framing ornament.

The concept of the quadriform order of divine creation had formed a fundamental argument in early patristic explanations of why the divine Creator-Word had also made the Gospel under four diverse aspects, bound together by one Spirit. The fourfold nature of the Gospel was regarded as an evident sign of its completeness and divine authority, its extension to the four corners or four cardinal points of the world a sign of the universal nature of the faith: Christ was revealed in the diversity and harmony of the fourfold Gospel, as in his fourfold creation.¹¹⁰ These ideas were entirely familiar to Hiberno-Latin commentators, who enumerated and even extended patristic lists of cosmological quaternities in their accounts of the four evangelists.¹¹¹

In the St Gall Gospels the frame of Mark's portrait, like that of John, presents quadriform diversity within a harmonious design of rectangular panels, all bound by the same stippled line. The design includes Christological signs, such as the several crosses concealed in the interlace of the narrow borders above and below the evangelist. The large middle rectangle of each side border also encloses a prominent lozenge-shaped panel filled with spirals and surrounded on its four sides by small panels, each containing an interlaced quadruped of the same type but in varied patterns and alternate colouring. Further sets of four panels in the same colouring, each panel containing one such interlaced quadruped, appear in the coupled initials in the facing incipit. The four rectangular panels of the stylised evangelist symbols in the corners of the portrait frame are fully integrated into the design, where they would convey their familiar allusion to the fourfold Gospel and its revelation of Christ in his humanity and divinity, his kingship and

109 E. Kitzinger, 'Interlace and icons: form and function in early Insular art', *The age of migrating ideas. Early medieval art in northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. R.M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (Stroud 1993) 3–15:12.

110 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, ed. F. Saguard, *Sources chrétiennes* 34, 3.8.11; 4.20, 10–11.

111 R. McNally, 'The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition' in *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff*, ed. A. Hiersemann (Stuttgart 1971) 111–122; J. O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular traditions of the Evangelists: exegesis and iconography', *Le isole britanniche e Roma in età Romanobarbarica*, 49–94; N.G. Baker, 'The evangelists in Insular culture, c. 600–c. 800 AD', 2 vols, unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2011.

priesthood. Set within such a framework, the icon of the evangelist with a Gospel book powerfully embodies the idea of a Christ-bearing figure.

The Crucifixion

Although the cross was depicted repeatedly and in a great variety of ways in the art of Late Antiquity, the representation of the Crucifixion was slow to appear; there are extant examples from the early fifth century, but remarkably few from before c. 700. In early Insular manuscript art the image of the Crucifixion survives only in the Durham Gospels (Plate 1.1) and the St Gall Gospels, though their common iconographic type is continued in the eleventh-century Southampton Psalter (Figure 8.1).¹¹² There are also numerous Irish examples preserved in the media of metalwork and stone over a long period, the earliest, and the one closest to the images in the Durham and St Gall Gospels, being the Athlone bronze plaque of the late eighth or early ninth century.¹¹³

The iconographic type appears with variants and in differing contexts but its distinguishing characteristics have been described as the combination of the long-robed Christ with two angelic beings overhead, the flanking figures of the spear-bearer and the sponge-bearer, and the curious cup-shaped depiction of the sponge or the small vessel containing it. Richard Bailey noted that this combination of features does not appear in pre-Romanesque Northumbria after its earliest extant example in the Durham Gospels which, he suggested, reflects the early existence of the type in Ireland. The origins of the Durham Gospels, whether in Northumbria or Ireland, have been much debated.¹¹⁴ It is probably earlier than the Lindisfarne Gospels, and certainly preserves far more of Irish traditions.

The common claim that the Irish Crucifixion type, first seen in the Durham and St Gall Gospels, derived from eastern models needs qualification. Christ in the long sleeveless *colobium*, flanked by sponge- and spear-bearers, does appear in the earliest surviving Crucifixion iconography in the eastern Mediterranean,

112 Southampton Psalter, Cambridge, St John's College, MS C.9, fol. 38v: Peter Harbison, *The golden age of Irish art. The medieval achievement 600–1200* (London 1998) colour pl.140.

113 Harbison, *Golden age of Irish art*, pl. 89; R.N. Bailey, 'A crucifixion plaque from Cumbria', in *Early Medieval Sculpture in North Britain and Ireland*, ed. John Higgitt (Oxford, BAR 152, 1986) 5–21.

114 E.A. Lowe, *Codices latini antiquiores*, II (Oxford 1935) 2nd ed. 1972, cat. 149. *The Durham Gospels*, ed. C. Verey, T.J. Brown and E. Coatsworth, EEMF 20 (Copenhagen 1980), reviewed by D. Ó Cróinín in *Peritia* 1 (1982) 352–62. Also, D. Ó Cróinín, 'Rathmelsigi, Willibrord, and the earliest Echternach manuscripts', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 17–49; C. Verey, 'A Northumbrian text family', *The Bible as book. The manuscript tradition*, 105–122. Most recently, Michelle Brown regards the Durham Gospels as a Northumbrian manuscript, earlier than the Lindisfarne Gospels, which she dates to c. 710–21, and closer to its Columban roots: M.P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels*, 48–53, 252–64, 401–40. See also R. Gameson, *Manuscript Treasures of Durham Cathedral* (London, 2010) 30–33.



Plate 9.11 The St Gall Gospels. Crucifixion image. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 266.

notably the late sixth-century Syriac Rabbula Gospels, and later in the painted lid of the pilgrim box now in the Vatican *Sancta Sanctorum*, but it was also known in the pre-Carolingian West, where Rome in particular was open to Byzantine influences, as in the wall-painting of the Theodotus chapel in Santa Maria Antiqua.¹¹⁵ The Insular type differs in important respects, however, from the Mediterranean examples.

With varying degrees of realism, early Mediterranean images of the long-robed Christ flanked by the spear-bearer and lance-bearer depict the rocky landscape setting of the Crucifixion and the presence of Christ's mother and beloved disciple; some include the two thieves and other figures from the Gospel narrative and show Christ with inclined head. The particular, circumstantial details help express the humanity of Christ and the historical reality of the event, but are quite absent from the Irish iconographic type. The simplification of naturalistic classicising forms and spatial depth was already quite advanced in some late antique Mediterranean images, but Insular responses to antique art were not just an extreme form of this process of stylisation. Kurt Weitzmann made the point that the images of the long-robed crucified Christ in an icon from Mount Sinai, the Theodotus chapel in Rome and the St Gall Gospels were roughly contemporary (he thought mid-eighth century) but, unlike the Mediterranean artists, the St Gall artist did 'not start out from the concept of an organic human body and then drape it'.¹¹⁶

The figural image produced by the Insular artist uses a variety of abstract means, including colour, line, shape, asymmetry, pattern and abstract ornament, to evoke a transcendent rather than a physical reality. Like the other images in the St Gall Gospels, the Crucifixion scene is geometrically constructed and with proportional measure.¹¹⁷ The framed picture area is divided into four rectangular framed compartments by the intersection of the vertical and horizontal lines of the central cross (above the centre point of the shaft) and the four attendant flanking figures are schematically arranged in the four compartments. The rectilinear composition is animated by the looping ribbon folds of Christ's garment and by the movement implied in the broadly triangular disposition of other details. Slowly the eye is drawn upwards along the diagonals formed by the shafts of the spear and sponge, and by the topmost diagonal folds of the garment, to the head of Christ, on which the spear-bearer and sponge-bearer fix their gaze.

The whole image is about seeing. The historical event and the human body of Christ, once seen by these two witnesses of the Crucifixion, are here presented to

115 Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art*, 2 (London 1972), figs. 327, 329, 328 respectively. See Lawrence Nees, 'On the image of Christ crucified in early medieval art', *Il Volto Santo in Europa. Culto e immagini del Crocifisso nel Medioevo*, ed. M.C. Ferrari and A. Meyer (Lucca 2005) 345–85.

116 Kurt Weitzmann, 'The classical in Byzantine art', *Studies in classical and Byzantine manuscript illumination*, ed. H.L. Kessler (Chicago and London 1971) 152–53, figs. 130, 131.

117 Stevick, 'A geometer's art', 186, 188, has noted the golden mean used in the ratio of the horizontal bar of the cross to the height.

the inner eye of the viewer in such a way as to reveal the spiritual meaning of the Crucifixion and the true identity of the Crucified. The nails and side wound are indicated, though Christ's suffering and death are not emotively or realistically presented. This is not a denial or diminution of his humanity, for his depiction in human form could itself be regarded as an affirmation of the Incarnation. His garment was seen by exegetes as a metaphor for the humanity he had put on, its royal red-purple colour could also allude to the suffering of his mortal body.¹¹⁸ In the St Gall image the metaphor is emphasised by the startling red colour of his bare outstretched arms, which are of the same width as the ribbon-folds of his garment. Christ is not as austere frontal and hieratic a figure as in the Durham Gospels: his youthful beardless face is here slightly turned and his feet and lower legs are seen in profile. However, all four terminals of the cross extend to the frame, suggesting its cosmological dimensions. Christ spans the cross with arms horizontally extended in orant gesture, his body forming the whole central axis of the design, the attendant figures occupying the earthly and heavenly realms he unites. The symbol of the *tetragonus mundi*, already seen at the centre of the great *chi-rho* which announces the Incarnation on p. 7 (Plate 9.4), is here concealed in the lozenge-shaped pattern of drapery on the breast of the Crucified, alluding to the divinity veiled by his humanity.

Notwithstanding these striking differences from the Mediterranean examples of the Crucifixion, the St Gall Gospels is like them in showing Christ simultaneously receiving the sponge of vinegar to his lips and the point of the lance to his side. Matthew, Mark and John describe Christ being offered a sponge of vinegar on a reed or stem of hyssop immediately before his death.¹¹⁹ John's gospel alone describes the wounding of Christ's side, from which blood and water flowed, and specifically says it happened only *after* Christ was pronounced dead (John 19:30, 32). The visual symmetry of sponge and spear in the Crucifixion image does not, therefore, record a historical moment in the Crucifixion narrative.

Patristic commentators had expounded the nuances of John's account of the Passion, which itself presents the two episodes of the sponge and the lance as the fulfilment of prophecy.¹²⁰ Augustine showed how they revealed Christ's identity as 'the Mediator between God and man' (1 Timothy 2:5): he who was manifested as man truly 'suffered all these things', but in his divinity, which was hidden, it was he who ordained all these things for the purpose of human salvation and foretold them through his prophets.¹²¹ Thus the hyssop on

118 George Henderson, *Vision and image in early Christian England* (Cambridge 1999) 122–35 on the use of red and purple to express material and spiritual values in antique and Insular society; Nicholas Constans, 'Weaving the body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos and the loom of the flesh', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995) 169–94 on the robe as a metaphor for the body of Christ.

119 Matthew 27:48–50; Mark 15:36–37; John 19:28–30.

120 John 19:28, 36–37, citing Psalms 68:22, Exodus 12:46, Zacharias 12:10.

121 Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium*, tr 119.4, ed. Willems, *CCSL* 36: pp. 659–60.

which the sponge of vinegar was held up to Christ (John 19:29) represented his humility in becoming man and obediently submitting to death, 'even the death of the cross' (Philippians 2:8), thereby providing the sacrifice necessary for redemption. The opening of his side with the spear after death was the divinely ordained means of opening the way to eternal life through the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist.¹²²

While belief in the humanity and divinity of Christ is a basic Christian tenet, the relationship of the two natures and its significance for human salvation was the subject of prolonged debate in the Christological controversies of the early Church. Leo the Great had made dramatic use of the mental image of the Crucifixion in his dogmatic letter known as the *Tome*, a rhetorical articulation of what, he argued, was affirmed in the Nicene Creed and had always been believed by the faithful. Leo and the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which had approved the *Tome*, were both acclaimed in subsequent ecumenical councils but became a particular symbol of orthodoxy in Latin Christendom as aspects of the debate with Constantinople continued. Leo and Chalcedon were repeatedly cited by Cassiodorus and Gregory the Great and affirmed and further clarified in the Roman Lateran Council of 649, a copy of whose *acta* was later taken to Northumbria. The five universal councils and the 649 Lateran council were solemnly affirmed by the bishops 'of the island of Britain' meeting at Hatfield in 679, preparatory to the presentation of such testimony of western orthodoxy by papal representatives at the Council of Constantinople in 680–81.¹²³ The long process of defining orthodoxy formed the larger context of the Insular Easter controversy. Insular knowledge of the theological and associated ecclesial issues is becoming increasingly recognised, particularly in the work of Columbanus, Cummian and Bede; the inscription above the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image seems related to the language of the debate.¹²⁴

Drawing on earlier patristic exegesis, Leo had explained that the redemption of humankind from original sin had required both divine power and a sinless human

122 John cites the prophecy of Christ being pierced: *Scriptura dicit: videbunt in quem transfixerunt* (John 19:37; Zacharias 12:10), but Augustine notes that, when describing the event, John significantly said that a soldier opened (*aperuit*) Christ's side: *sed unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit, et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua* (John 19:34): *In Iohannis evangeliorum*, tr. 120.2, 3, ed. Willems, CCSL 36: pp. 661–62.

123 Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.17–18: *Ecclesiastical History of the English people*, ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1969) 385–91.

124 David Ganz, 'Roman manuscripts in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England', *Roma fra oriente e occidente. Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 49 (2002) 604–47: 612–20; J. O'Reilly, '“Know who and what he is”: the context and inscriptions of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image', *Making and meaning in Insular art*, ed. R. Moss (Dublin 2007) 301–316; Alan Thacker, *Bede and Augustine of Hippo: history and figure in sacred text* (Jarrow 2005); Sarah Foot, *Bede's Church* (Jarrow 2012); Maura Walsh and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's letter 'De controversia paschali', together with a related Irish computistical tract 'De ratione computandi'* (Toronto 1988).

sacrifice: 'Overcoming the author of sin and death would be beyond us, had not he whom sin could not defile, nor death hold down, taken up our nature and made it his own'.¹²⁵ Leo stated the belief that, because of the unprecedented character of Christ's virginal conception and birth, he took on human nature as it had been created in the beginning, without the stain of sin, and so he alone was able to offer an acceptable sacrifice for the sake of humankind. When he assumed humanity at the Incarnation his divinity was undiminished; the two natures were maintained, complete and unconfused, but united in a single person:

To pay off the debt of our state, invulnerable nature was united to a nature that could suffer; so that in a way that corresponded to the remedies we needed, 'one and the same Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Timothy 2:5) could both on the one hand die and on the other be incapable of death.¹²⁶

Leo emphasised that Christ suffered thirst, weariness and pain in the weakness of his human nature but, because that nature was inseparably united at the Incarnation with his divine nature, it was possible to say, as in the creed, that the Son of God was crucified.¹²⁷ Leo challenged the spiritually blind to look on the Crucifixion and see (in the sense of spiritually understand) what nature it was that hung upon the cross, but also to look on the side of the crucified laid open by the soldier's spear and 'identify the source from which blood and water flowed (John 19:34) to bathe the Church of God with font and cup'.¹²⁸

The Crucifixion iconography used in the St Gall Gospels presents the paradox of Christ's two natures. The hallowed convention of showing sponge and spear simultaneously touching the Crucified attests to the unity in Christ's person of his humanity, in which he experienced thirst, suffering and death, and his divinity, by which he triumphed over death, his wound becoming the source of the life-giving sacraments of baptism and the eucharist.

Insular commentators were familiar with patristic exegesis on the significance of Christ's wound, which in the Insular Easter controversy was used as an important defence of orthodoxy against particularism. Like Leo the Great, Cummian in *De controversia paschali*, c. 632, drew on earlier Fathers when expounding

125 Leo, *Tome* (Ep. 28), ed. N.P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 1 (London 1990) 77, ll. 21–25.

126 *ibid.*, 78.

127 *ibid.*, 80. The paradox was succinctly transmitted by Isidore's *Etymologiae*, 7.2.44, ed. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* 1: 'Only the man endured the cross, but because of the unity of Person, the God is also said to have endured it [. . .] Therefore we speak of the Son of God as crucified (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:8), not in the power of his divinity, but in the weakness of his humanity', trs. Barney and Lewis, *Etymologies*, 157.

128 *Videat quae natura transfixa clavis pependerit in crucis ligno et aperto per militis lanceam latere crucifixi intellegat unde sanguis et aqua fluxerit, ut ecclesia dei et lavacro rigaretur et poculo*: Leo, *Tome*, ed. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1, p. 81.

Christ's wound as the only source of the sacraments, and therefore a powerful symbol of the unity of the universal Church. Citing Cyprian, and assembling additional biblical testimonia, such as those which Augustine had used in his commentary on St John's account of the Crucifixion, Cummian likened the emission from the wound in the side of Christ to the creation of Eve from the side of Adam. By this typology he alluded to the major Pauline image of the Church as the one body of Christ and all the faithful as members of that body: 'Surely this is, as the apostle says, a great mystery in Christ and the Church: *mysterium magnum est in Christo, et in ecclesia* (cf. Ephesians 5:32). Thus there is no other fashioned from the side of Christ except the one. There is one mystical place in Jesus Christ's side, from the lance of the soldier, from which flowed water and blood. These are two symbols of the one Church'.¹²⁹

In the St Gall Gospels the unique account of the wounding of Christ's side from John's gospel (John 19:34) is interpolated into Matthew's gospel text on p. 75, following the description of how one who stood at the cross offered Christ a sponge of vinegar on a reed (Matthew 27:49): *Alius autem accepta lancea pupungit latus eius et exit aqua et sanguis*: 'Another, however, having taken a lance, pierced his side and water and blood came out'. Martin MacNamara has noted that the interpolation, which represents an early harmonising tradition, witnessed in some fourth-century Greek manuscripts, was transmitted in Latin Gospel texts largely through Irish manuscripts.¹³⁰

There is also evidence from outside the context of Gospel books of the devotional as well as theological importance of the spear and sponge. Among the symbolic Crucifixion scenes depicted on pilgrims' ampullae from the Holy Land in the collection at Columbanus's foundation of Bobbio, one shows an empty triumphal cross flanked by two standing figures holding the raised lance and sponge and, above the cross, a medallion portrait of Christ in glory.¹³¹ The eighth-century Würzburg manuscript of the Pauline Epistles, known for its rich collection of Irish and Latin glosses, has a prefatory image of the Crucifixion which was influenced by the Irish iconographic type (Figure 8.3). Although the figures of the lance-bearer and sponge-bearer are not included, their traditional allusion to Christ's divinity and humanity is conveyed by the shaftless head of the lance and the cup-shaped sponge, which are displayed against Christ's robed body.¹³²

129 Cummian's letter '*De controversia paschali*', ed. M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín, (Toronto 1988) 78, ll. 157–60; Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium*, 120.2, ed. Willems, CCL 36, 661; cf. *Tractatus Hilarii, In epist. can. I Petri*, ed. R.E. McNally, CCL 108B, 86, ll. 363–66.

130 M. MacNamara, 'Bible text and illumination in St Gall Stiftsbibliothek Codex 51, with special reference to Longinus in the Crucifixion scene': *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art*, 193–94. This interpolation is also found, for example, in the Book of Mulling and BL, MS Add 40618.

131 A. Grabar, *Ampoules de terre sainte* (Paris 1958) cat. 6, pl. 37–39.

132 Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek Cod. M. p. th. F.69, fol. 7v; Nees, 'On the image of Christ crucified', 360–65, fig. 4; Catherine E. Karkov, 'Tracing the Anglo-Saxons in the Epistles of Paul: the case of Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.p.th.f.69' in *Anglo-Saxon Traces*, ed. Jane Roberts and Leslie Webster (Tempe: ACMRS, 2011), 133–44, pl. VI.

In *De locis sanctis* Adomnán of Iona gives a vivid account for readers at the world's edge of how the pilgrim Arculf saw these two relics of the Passion in the holy places of Jerusalem. The sponge which had been 'soaked in vinegar and placed on a hyssop by those who crucified the Lord' (John 19:29) was displayed to pilgrims in the chapel situated between 'the basilica of Golgotha', on the site of the Crucifixion, and the Martyrium, the site of the finding of the True Cross, all indicated on an accompanying diagram. The sponge was conserved in the chalice Christ had used at the Last Supper and, according to tradition, from which he drank when eating with the apostles after the Resurrection.¹³³

In the context of a liturgical Gospel book, the Insular iconography of the crucified Christ with wounded side would particularly have evoked the eucharist. The account of Christ's institution of the eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:23–25, identifying the bread with his body, *quod pro vobis tradetur*, and the wine with his blood, and Christ's command that the bread and wine be received in commemoration of him, is immediately followed by the anticipation of his future return: 'For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show forth the death of the Lord, until he come'. This verse begins the mass lection (1 Corinthians 11:26–32) in the Stowe Missal. A series of scriptural acclamations at the fraction includes the text, 'the bread which we break is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, Alleluia. The chalice which we bless is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia' (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:16–17).¹³⁴

The belief that each celebration of the eucharist 'shows forth the Lord's death' had been allusively developed in patristic tradition and liturgy, but the symbolic re-enactment of the Passion at the eucharistic altar came to be more overtly articulated as a series of parallels. In the Irish commentary on the Mass which was appended to the Stowe Missal, probably soon after its completion, the stages of Christ's Passion and Resurrection recalled in the liturgical actions of the eucharist are unequivocally spelled out. The *commixtio*, or mixing of water and wine in the chalice before consecration, is interpreted as symbolising the union of Christ's divinity with his humanity, and his union with humanity, at his conception. The host on the paten is the body of Christ on the cross; the *fractio panis* before the communion is the breaking of Christ's body with the nails and the spear, when baptism and the eucharist were born from his side; the priest cuts off a fragment of the host, as Christ's right side was pierced.¹³⁵

The Gospel does not specify on which side Christ was wounded. The depiction of the wound, not on the side of the heart but on Christ's right side, in both eastern and western Crucifixion scenes, doubtless to some extent reflects the general favouring of *dextra* rather than *sinister* found in many cultural contexts, including

133 Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, 1.7, ed. D. Meehan, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 3 (Dublin 1958) 51.

134 Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS D.II.3, fols. 12–67: fols. 15–15v, 33v, *The Stowe Missal* 1, ed. G.F. Warner, *Henry Bradshaw Society* 31, p. 5: *Fratres, quotiescumque manducabitis panem hunc, et bibetis calicem istum, mortem domini adnuntiabitis donec ueniat.*

135 *Stowe Missal* 2, 41–42.

numerous biblical texts. Because of the biblical and patristic identification of Christ as the new Temple, prefigured in the Temple in Jerusalem, the healing water of life which issued from the right side of the Temple (Ezekiel 47:1–2) was related to the healing sacramental stream which issued from Christ's side on the cross.¹³⁶

The depiction of the spear-bearer to Christ's left in the St Gall Gospels, the Athlone plaque, the Southampton Psalter and in most other examples of the Irish Crucifixion type, distinguishes them from almost all surviving early Crucifixion scenes elsewhere, though there is no evidence to suggest the motif represents a doctrinal difference. The assumption that it is the conservative vestige of an Early Christian type superseded elsewhere is, of its nature, difficult to demonstrate.¹³⁷ Moreover, the Durham Gospels Crucifixion shows the wound on Christ's right, as do a number of Irish examples in other media.¹³⁸ The Irish vernacular commentary on the Mass appended to the Stowe Missal assumes the wound was on Christ's right, but its account of how this is symbolised in the actions of the fraction of the host may indicate a potential source of confusion. The particle cut off from the bottom of the half of the host on the priest's left hand is described as 'the figure of the wounding with the lance in the armpit of the right side; for westwards was Christ's face on the cross, to wit, *contra ciuitatem*, and eastwards was the face of Longinus; what to him was the left to Christ was the right'.¹³⁹

In the Crucifixion scene in the Durham Gospels, as in some Mediterranean examples, including the Rabbula Gospels and the Theodotus chapel in Rome, the figure on Christ's right is labelled Longinus (simply meaning spear/lance-bearer). In the St Gall Crucifixion, the unnamed spear-holder standing on Christ's left receives a thin stream of blood from Christ's wounded side into his eye. This is probably the earliest pictorial witness to the apocryphal story that blood from the wound healed Longinus of his blindness. As discussed by Martin McNamara, the

136 For the liturgical expression of this exegesis in the antiphon *Vidi aquam egredientem de templo a latere dextro. Alleluia*, used in the vigil of Easter in Rome by the late sixth century, see É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: liturgical images and the Old English poems of the Dream of the Rood tradition* (London, 2005) 151 and n. 147.

137 Peter Harbison, 'The bronze Crucifixion plaque said to be from St John's (Rinnagan), near Athlone', *Journal of Irish Archaeology* 2 (1984) 1–18:5–7, argues that the source of the motif is unlikely to have been Insular. The only extant non-Insular example is a silver plate (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg) with Syriac inscriptions and engravings, including a Crucifixion scene of the long-robed Christ, the cup-shaped sponge and the lance-bearer on Christ's left. Although it may preserve early tradition from the region of Syria and Palestine, it has recently been described as Central Asian, ninth or tenth century: *Byzantium 330–1453*, ed. Robin Cormack and Maria Vassilaki (London 2008), cat. 286.

138 Harbison, 'A bronze Crucifixion plaque', pl. 5 for the Calf of Man panel; cf. crosses at Moone, Castledermot south, Ullard and Arboe; Cormac Bourke, 'The chronology of Irish Crucifixion plaques', *The age of migrating ideas. Early medieval art in northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. R.M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (Edinburgh 1993) 175–81: 176, figs. b–f.

139 *Stowe Missal*, 2, p. 41. Cf. Bede's account of the door in the right side of the temple: *Et bene in parte domus dextrae quia dextrum eius latus a milite apertum sancta credit ecclesia: De templo*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 1, 166, ll. 760–64.

origins of the story are uncertain. It features, with variants, in the rich tradition of apocrypha in Irish sources, but mostly at a later date than the St Gall Gospels, as in the *Acts of Pilate* (*Gospel of Nicodemus*). Its earliest appearance, however is in Blathmac's poem on Mary, which tells how Christ's heart was pierced, wine spilled, and blood from his side 'instantly cured the fully blind man as he openly with his two hands was plying the lance'.¹⁴⁰

The reference to the Longinus story in the St Gall Crucifixion may seem a narrative intrusion into a symbolic image, reducing its temporal ambiguity, but it is not arbitrary. The healing and consequent conversion of Longinus emphasises the theme of physical sight and spiritual insight already present in the Gospel text. St John's account of the wounding of Christ's side by a nameless soldier is delivered as by an eye-witness who tells the reader the significance of what he has seen: 'he who saw it has given testimony and his testimony is true [...] that you may believe' (John 19:34–35). The evangelist presents the wounding as a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, including, 'They shall look on him whom they pierced' (Zacharias 12:10; John 19:37). In the gospels of Matthew and Mark, instead of the spear-bearer there is the figure of the Roman centurion who, standing by the cross and watching the eschatological signs accompanying Christ's death, is brought to recognise the true identity of the Crucified with the acclamation: 'Truly this was the Son of God' (Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39). The accounts are in effect harmonised in the later recension of the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate*, and in the Irish *Passion of Longinus* in the *Leabhar Breac*, where Longinus is identified with the centurion. The St Gall image tells the apocryphal story with extreme economy. The pupil of Longinus's left eye is still an unseeing slit but the right eye into which the healing blood falls has already been made whole. The reader follows Longinus's gaze as he looks up at Christ and sees the source of his physical healing, with the difference that the reader is drawn to look on this corporeal image with the inner eye and to see the source of salvation.

The opening words of the inscription placed above the Durham Gospels Crucifixion constitute a very different means of similarly calling on the reader to know who Christ is: *Scito quis et qualis est*. The text suggests the language of Christological debate and acclamation. The upper inscription supplements the *titulus* on the cross and the impassive Crucifixion image by referring to Christ's suffering and his sinlessness; it also enigmatically alludes to the connection between the unity of his two natures and the means of human redemption.¹⁴¹ The lateral

140 McNamara, 'Bible text and illumination', 191–202: 197–200; Harbison, 'The bronze Crucifixion plaque', 13.

141 *Scito quis et qualis est qui talia cuius titulus cui / nulla est inventa passus p(ro) nobis p(ro)p(ter) hoc culpa* The general sense may be: 'Know who and what kind he is, (1) who suffered such things for us, caused by this (i.e. on account of our sin), (2) whose title is "in whom no sin was found"': J. O'Reilly, "'Know who and what he is": the context and inscriptions of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image', *Making and meaning in Insular art*, 301–316.

inscriptions urge readers to respond to the recognition of his identity by actively participating in their own salvation through sharing in Christ's suffering in order to share in his risen life. The inscriptions framing the two sides and lower edge of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion provide invaluable documentation of the kind of associations which the Insular image of the Crucifixion could prompt for contemporaries: '[He], casting down the author of death, renews our life if we suffer with him/He rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God the Father/So that when we have been restored to life, we may reign with him'.¹⁴²

Expounding the familiar Pauline concept of being buried with Christ in baptism and dying to sin in order to rise with him (Romans 6:3–12), Leo the Great argued that, as what is done in the members of the body of Christ corresponds to that which is done in the case of the head, then baptism is a sacramental representation of Christ's crucifixion, burial and resurrection.¹⁴³ But the Pauline image also provided a pattern for the spiritual life of the baptised. The belief that, 'If we suffer with him [. . .] together we shall reign' (cf. Romans 8:17 and 2 Timothy 2:12) summarises a major New Testament theme which repeatedly occurs in patristic and especially monastic literature. Cassian, for example, presented the humility and obedience of the monastic life itself as a daily crucifixion and dying to the world.¹⁴⁴ The Rule of St Benedict describes lifelong monastic obedience to Christ's teaching as 'a share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom'.¹⁴⁵

Columbanus's *Regula monachorum* opens with the monastic imperative of obedience, exemplified in Christ even to the point of death on the cross (Philippians 2:5–8), and refers to the Gospel command to take up the cross and follow him (Matthew 10:38).¹⁴⁶ In Epistle 4 Columbanus exhorted his monks to be 'sharers in the Lord's passion; for if we suffer with him, together we shall reign' (cf. Romans 8:17, 2 Timothy 2:12).¹⁴⁷ The context makes it clear that his spiritual counsel of being united with Christ was bound up with his belief in the connection between

142 Right: *Auctorem mortis deiecens vitam nostram restituens si tamen conpatiamur* Left: *Surrexit a mortuis [. . .] sedet ad dexteram d(ei) patris* Bottom: *Ut nos cum resuscitados simul et regnare faciat . . .* E. Coatsworth, 'The decoration of the Durham Gospels', *The Durham Gospels*, 59.

143 Leo, Ep. 16.3, PL 54, 698–99; cf. Gregory, Ep. 43, PL 77, 497–98.

144 Cassian, *Institutes* 4. 34, 35, trans. Boniface Ramsey, *John Cassian: the Institutes*, (New Jersey 2000) 97–98; *Conlationes* 19.8, ed. E. Pichery, *Sources chrétiennes* 64, 146: *Finis quidem coenobiotae est omnes suas mortificare et crucifigere uoluntates ac secundum euangelicae perfectionis salutare mandatum nihil de crastino cogitare.*

145 *Rule of St Benedict*, Prologue, ed. T. Fry (Collegeville 1980) 166: *in eius doctrinam usque ad mortem in monasterio perseverantes, passionibus Christi per patientiam participemus, ut et regno eius mereamur esse consortes.* ['faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom'.]

146 Columbanus, *Regula monachorum* 1, 4, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. Walker, p. 124, ll. 6–15, p. 126, ll. 12–16.

147 Ep. 4. 6:32, ll. 4–6. The image is also in his exhortation of the Gaulish bishops, Ep 2.6: 16, ll. 33–34.

the unity of Christ's divine and human natures and the mystery of redemption itself:

The gospels are full of this matter, and of it they are chiefly composed; for this is the truth of the gospel, that the true disciples of Christ crucified should follow him with the cross. A great example has been shown, a great mystery [*sacramentum*] has been declared; the Son of God willingly (for he was offered up because he himself willed it) mounted the cross as a criminal, leaving to us, as it is written, an example, that we should follow in his footsteps.¹⁴⁸

Like Leo the Great, Columbanus refers to the crucified Christ as *exemplum* and *sacramentum*, both the human pattern to be imitated and the divine means by which alone this may be realised.¹⁴⁹

The inscriptions which surround the Durham Gospels Crucifixion and the further context provided by the ending of Matthew's gospel (Matthew 28: 17–20), which is framed on the recto of the image, are important aids to its interpretation. Christ crucified, risen, ascended and glorified is presented in a single timeless visual image which is inscribed with the apocalyptic title announced at his Second Coming: *Alpha et Omega, initium et finis* (Apocalypse 1:8). In contrast, the St Gall Crucifixion is designed to be seen with the facing image, which completes its meaning.

Christ and the twelve apostles

The two facing pictures, positioned at the end of the St Gall Gospels, are closely linked by their similar outer frames and internal divisions of space and by their colouring, figural types and gestures (pp. 266–67, Plates 9.11 and 9.12). On both pages small unhaloed figures look up from left and right at a large central figure of Christ in a purple robe, flanked by a pair of inward-turning angels. Such striking visual similarities prompt reflection on the spiritual realities which connect the two images.

The upper half of the image on p. 267, facing the Crucifixion, is divided into three vertical panels. In the centre is the frontal, half-length, bearded figure of Christ holding a cross staff and book, attended by two full-length angels blowing trumpets in the narrower outer panels. On this last page of the book Christ at his second coming raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing, but its Mediterranean type is transformed by the inter-weaving of his fingers, a variant of the Insular motif displayed on the first page in the gesture of Matthew's symbol announcing the coming of the incarnate Christ. The image of Christ in glory is seen above a horizontal dividing frame; beneath it are the twelve

148 Ep. 4.6: 30, ll. 21–26.

149 See Leo the Great, *Tractatus* 63.4 and 72.1, ed. A. Chavasse, *Leo Magnus Tractatus*, CCSL 138A, 384–385, ll. 64–73; 441–42, ll. 15–19.



Plate 9.12 The St Gall Gospels. Vision of the Parousia (Christ and the Twelve Apostles).
St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 51, p. 267.

apostles, symmetrically arranged in two tiers. The scene has no close surviving precedent. It is not a literal illustration of any one scriptural text though includes elements from Christ's eschatological discourse to his disciples on the Mount of Olives which, significantly, prefaces the account of the Passion in Matthew's gospel:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds with much power and majesty. And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice: and they shall gather from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them.

(Matthew 24:30–31)

The *signum filii hominis in caelo* was widely interpreted as the appearance of the cross at the coming of Christ at the end of time. The reference to *tunc plangent omnes tribus terrae* evokes one of the Old Testament prophecies also quoted in St John's gospel at the opening of Christ's side on the cross: *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt* (John 19:34, 37; cf. Zacharias 12:10). John's quotation was itself seen to be prophetic for it is cited more fully in the Apocalypse. At Christ's glorious coming with the angels, he is revealed as *Alpha* and *Omega* but also as the one who was pierced: 'every eye shall see him (*et videbit eum omnis oculus*) and they also that pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him' (Apocalypse 1:7). Commentators frequently noted that the wicked will see only the wounded humanity, whereas the blessed will see the full majesty of God. There is no visual allusion in St Gall to the stark prophecy from the following chapter of Matthew that when the Son of man has come with all the angels he will sit *super sedem maiestatis suae*; all the nations will be gathered together before him and he will separate the sheep from the goats to right and left, welcoming those on his right to his Father's kingdom, commanding those on his left to depart to everlasting fire (Matthew 25:31–46). Christ's words of blessing and condemnation (Matthew 25: 34, 41), inscribed on scrolls, became an important element in the iconography of the Last Judgement. They are partially seen on an ivory often described as ninth-century Anglo-Saxon and the earliest surviving Last Judgement, they appear in the Bamberg Apocalypse, c. 1000, and frequently thereafter.¹⁵⁰ The St Gall scene has more in common with early images

150 Beat Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christliche Kunst des ersten Jahrtausends*, Wiener Byzantinische Studien 3 (Vienna 1966) 118–20, pl. 35, 45; Herbert L. Kessler, *Spiritual seeing. Picturing God's invisibility in medieval art* (Philadelphia 2000) 88–103. [Editors' note: For more information on the date of the ivory see Paul Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings, Early Christian to Romanesque* (London, V&A Publishing, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2010) 152–53 and 190–93, cat. nos. 36 and 46. See also the website of the Victoria and Albert Museum, 'Collections', <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O90891/the-last-judgement-panel-unknown/>].

of the *parousia*, meaning the coming or arrival of Christ at the end of time, which exegetes came to think of as the Second Coming, rather than with the Last Judgement, which it presages.

The distinctiveness of the St Gall image, nevertheless, becomes evident in comparison with two early examples of the Second Coming, in the probably ninth-century fragmentary Turin Gospels (which has often been seen as a later continental derivative of the St Gall Gospels page or a common model) and in the early tenth-century Anglo-Saxon miniatures added to the Carolingian Aethelstan/Galba Psalter (Figure 1.2).¹⁵¹ In addition to angels with trumpets, these two manuscripts include stylised classical personifications to depict the four winds which accompany Christ's coming (Matthew 24:31) and the Turin image has further cosmological allusions in the ringed crosses which mark the four cardinal points of the frame. In both manuscripts, Christ is shown holding the standard of the cross and is entirely surrounded by numerous members of the heavenly company, not flanked by the separated ranks of the blessed and the damned, for the *parousia* is 'the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints' (1 Thessalonians 3:13). In this frequently quoted visionary account, the risen Christ, 'the first fruits of them that sleep', is described as being accompanied by the resurrection of all who have believed in his coming, every one in his own order: 'the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall rise again incorruptible' (1 Corinthians 15:23, 52); 'the dead who are in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them [. . .] and so shall always be with the Lord' (1 Thessalonians 4: 15–16).

The presence of the twelve apostles alone in the St Gall image is therefore unexpected. It cannot be satisfactorily explained by Christ's saying to his followers that, when the Son of man is enthroned in majesty, they too will sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). As the twelve are shown not seated but standing, and neither the resurrection of the dead nor the division of the blessed and the damned at the Last Judgement is shown, it raises the question of why the apostles are given such prominence.

The term *apostoli* refers to the inner core of disciples, called and taught by Christ, who were sent *usque ad ultimum terrae* (Acts 1:8) as the chief witnesses of his ministry, passion and resurrection. They gave powerful testimony of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 4:33) and St Paul proclaimed the centrality of the resurrection they had witnessed to the teaching of the faith (1 Corinthians 15: 1–23). The four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles (1: 2–11) variously describe how the

151 Turin, Bibliotheca Nazionale, MS O.IV.20, fol. 2a recto, and London, BL, MS Cotton, Galba A.XVIII, fol. 21r. J. O'Reilly, 'Early medieval text and image: the wounded and exalted Christ', *Peritia* 6–7 (1987–88) 72–118: 76–78, 92–93, pl.7, 8; Robert Deshman, 'The Galba Psalter: pictures, texts and context in an early medieval prayerbook', *Anglo-Saxon England* 26 (1997) 109–38, at 113–15, 134–35, repr. In *Eye and Mind: Collected essays in Anglo-Saxon and early medieval art by Robert Deshman*, ed. Adam S. Cohen (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2010) 35–57, at 38–39, 55.

risen Christ had continued to be with the eleven disciples for a period of forty days after the Resurrection, teaching them and giving them proofs of the reality of his bodily resurrection, a point greatly emphasised in exegesis.¹⁵² He had continued to instruct them in the interpretation of Scripture, specifically by showing how it was written that Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead on the third day. They were to be the witnesses of these things to all peoples (Luke 24:45–48). Christ's final commandment to the disciples he had taught, recounted at the end of Matthew's gospel, was understood to have been given immediately before the Ascension, which the other gospels and Acts describe.¹⁵³

Commenting on Acts 1:3, Bede noted this forty-day period of time after the Resurrection also signified that after the Ascension, when Christ would no longer be physically present with his followers, he would still by his continuing invisible sacramental presence fulfil his final promise, 'Behold, I am with you always, even to the consummation of the world' (Matthew 28:20).¹⁵⁴ At the Ascension, the disciples were assured that the same Jesus they had seen taken up into heaven 'shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven': *sic veniet quemadmodum vidistis eum euntem in caelum* (Acts 1:11). The *parousia* is the consummation, when that promise is fulfilled. It was popularly believed it would occur on the site of the Ascension, 'Behold the days of the Lord shall come [. . .] And his feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives' (Zacharias 14:1, 4). In his account of the holy places of Jerusalem, Adomnán of Iona describes the harmony of the other synoptic gospels with Matthew's account of Christ's response to the disciples' question, 'What is the sign of your coming and of the consummation of the world?'¹⁵⁵

Further comparison with the Second Coming as visualised in the Turin Gospels and the Galba Psalter brings into relief what is unusual about the St Gall image. In the Turin bifolium the Ascension and Second Coming are on facing pages.¹⁵⁶ The Ascension on fol. 1a verso is prominently inscribed with the text of Acts 1:11 across the centre of the page. Above the inscription is a bust-length image of Christ between two angels, within a medallion, around which stand four more angels. A *titulus* over Christ's head proclaims his identity as the Son of God, *Ihs Xps filios dmni*, but he is still visible in his exalted humanity. Gregory the Great and other fathers had emphasised that in taking on human nature and submitting to death Christ was born lower than the angels (cf. Hebrews 2:7), but in his Resurrection he overcame death and at his Ascension his humanity was exalted

152 'All this was so that it would be recognised that the proper character of the divine and of the human went on existing inseparable in him', Leo, *Tome*, ed. Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils* 1, p. 81.

153 Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 16: 14–16; Luke 24: 33, 44–51; Acts 1:1–11.

154 Bede, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, ed. M.L.W. Laistner and D. Hurst, *CCSL* 121, 10; *Homiliae* 2.7, 228, tr. Martin and Hurst, 2, 105–109.

155 *De Locis Sanctis* 1.27, 70.

156 Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, 83–88, figs. 120, 121; Alexander, *Insular manuscripts*, figs. 279, 280.

above the angels, to receive the glory his divinity had always had.¹⁵⁷ In the lower register of the Turin Ascension there are twelve separate rectangular bust-length portraits of the apostles, including St Paul, who is anachronistically paired with St Peter, as is common in the iconography of the Ascension, though the Virgin is not included here. The apostles are arranged in two rows, four on the top line, flanking the angelic messenger, eight below. There are differences in the colouring of their garments and they are individually identified by name, but are all of similar beardless facial type and frontal pose. They look out towards the viewer, not upwards at Christ, who raises his hand in benediction (cf. Luke 24:50) and holds a book, in addition to the cross.

On the facing page in the Turin Gospels, fol. 2a recto, the scene of the Second Coming shows some ninety-six small half-length male figures, perhaps suggesting a monastic community, each in a rectangular frame and all set in horizontal rows within a close-packed regular grid. They form a numerous heavenly host on all sides of the central rectangular panel of Christ, who is shown standing and holding the cross. Clearly, the Turin scene of the Ascension is closer than its scene of the Second Coming is to the St Gall image. In the St Gall image it is the apostles, to whom the Ascension promise of Christ's return was made, who are alone shown at its fulfilment.

The Anglo-Saxon pictorial cycle in the Galba Psalter includes two illuminations of Christ at the Second Coming, where he is enthroned in glory and accompanied by throngs of figures who are clearly identified by inscriptions, reflecting the litany, as various categories or choirs of the communion of saints (Figures 1.2, 1.7).¹⁵⁸ On fol. 2v, which acts as a frontispiece, Christ is seen with the instruments of the Passion – the spear, the sponge and the cross – and accompanied by the named choirs of angels, prophets (rather, patriarchs)¹⁵⁹ and apostles arranged in horizontal registers; the apostles stand with St Peter, St Paul and the Virgin centrally positioned, as commonly seen in the iconography of the Ascension. On fol. 21r Christ is shown enthroned and holding a small cross, with his wounded side displayed and his hand raised in blessing. His mandorla is entirely surrounded by the named choirs of martyrs, confessors and virgins.¹⁶⁰ The depiction of the Second Coming in the Turin Gospels and the Galba Psalter therefore raises more acutely the question of what particular associations might have been

157 Gregory, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, 1.8, ed. Adriaen, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, CCSL 142, 23.

158 John Hennig, 'Studies in early western devotion to the choirs of the saints', *Studia Patristica* 8 (1963) 239–47.

159 See Deshman, 'The Galba Psalter', and 'Anglo-Saxon art after Alfred', *Art Bulletin* 56 (1974) 176–200, reprinted *Eye and Mind, Collected essays in Anglo-Saxon and early medieval art by Robert Deshman*, ed. A. Cohen, Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2010, 12–33, 15–16.

160 E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, 900–1066* (London 1976) cat. 5, pl. 31–33.

suggested by the representation of the twelve apostles alone in the scene in the St Gall Gospels?

George Henderson has noted that in contrast to Irish literary descriptions of the apostles, representations of the apostles on the Irish high crosses tend not to show individual differences of appearance but depend on their number for identification.¹⁶¹ An additional example, of particular interest in considering the St Gall diptych, is the base of the high cross at Moone: twelve identical frontal figures, arranged in three rows of four, are placed beneath the Crucifixion of the long-robed Christ, who is flanked by the sponge- and spear-bearers.¹⁶² In the St Gall Gospels none of the apostles is identified, not even St Peter, and all have exactly the same kind of hair, clean-shaven face, figural type and frontal pose, though there is some variation in the colouring and folds of their garments.

The number of the apostles, prefigured in the twelve sons of Jacob (Israel), the eponymous founders of the twelve tribes of Israel, is already important in the Gospel accounts of their calling and in the urgency after the Ascension of filling the place left by Judas Iscariot with one who would join the apostolic mission as a living witness of Christ's ministry and resurrection (Acts 1:15–26).¹⁶³ This event was followed by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the twelve at Pentecost when they spoke in tongues and were intelligible to people from diverse parts of the Roman world and beyond it (Acts 2:1–14), reversing the divisive confusion of tongues at Babel and expressing the unity of the Church and the universal nature of its mission.¹⁶⁴

The twelve apostles represent not only the historical foundations of the universal Church, but provided continuing models of its faith and practice. Members of the early apostolic community had 'but one heart and soul', possessed all things in common (Acts 4:32) and were reported as acting and praying *unanimiter*, so that the *vita apostolica* was a frequently cited example of concord and charity for the Christian life, and particularly the monastic life.¹⁶⁵ Hagiographic descrip-

161 G. Henderson, 'The representation of the Apostles in Insular art, with special reference to the new Apostles frieze at Tarbat, Ross-shire', *Text, image and interpretation. Studies in Anglo-Saxon literature and its Insular context in honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, ed. A. Minnis and J. Roberts (Turnhout 2007) 473–94; 477–80. See D. Ó Cróinín, 'Cummianus Longus and the iconography of the apostles in early Irish literature', *Sages, saints and scholars: Celtic studies in honour of James Carney*, ed. D. Ó Corráin, L. Breathnach and K. McCone (Maynooth 1989) 268–79; Netzer, 'Apostles', *Cultural Interplay in the eighth century*, 62–71.

162 Henry, *Irish art in the early Christian period*, figs. 68, 71.

163 See, for example, R. Hillier, *Arator on the Acts of the Apostles. A Baptismal Commentary* (Oxford 1993) 41.

164 Bede, *Homiliae evangelii* 2.17, ed. Hurst and Fraipont, *CCSL* 122, 307, trs. Martin and Hurst, 2: 164–77; *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et Retractiones*, ed. Laistner and Hurst, *CCSL* 121, 16–17; 126.

165 Acts 4:32 is used several times in Cassian's *Conlationes* and is fundamental to Augustine's *Praeceptum*; Augustine, *The Monastic Rules*, ed. B. Ramsay (New York 2004) 110; 64, n.30. It is cited in Gregory's *Liber responsionum*, recalled in Bede's encomium on the monastic household of the

tions of monastic communities often picture a holy founder, such as Columba and Columbanus, with twelve companions. The apostles were closely identified with the deposit of faith. Only two of the four evangelists, Matthew and John, were apostles, but Mark and Luke were widely presented as having been inspired by the testimony of the two chief apostles, Peter and Paul respectively; Augustine noted that the gospels of Mark and Luke appear between those of Matthew and John and are supported by them.¹⁶⁶ Apostolicity has been described as the main criterion for the rest of the New Testament canon and apostolic testimony was seen to underlies baptismal and eucharistic rites.¹⁶⁷ The apostles were believed to be the authors of the Apostles' Creed, used at baptism in the rite of the *traditio symboli* which, with the symbolic handing on of the fourfold Gospel to catechumens, represented the transmission of the faith.¹⁶⁸ In the tradition of the fathers and early councils, Bede related the norm of the Church's teaching directly to the commandment of Christ to 'teach them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Matthew 28:20) and added: 'Whoever observes and teaches everything the Lord commanded the apostles, without either adding anything further or omitting any of them, such a one is indeed a pillar in God's house which is the Church and a bulwark of truth' (1 Timothy 3:15).¹⁶⁹

After the Virgin, the twelve named apostles lead the list of those evoked in the *Communicantes* prayer in the eucharist, in which the communion and unity of all the members of the body of Christ throughout time and space is celebrated.¹⁷⁰ The apostles are a point of connection between the Church founded on earth and completed in heaven; their presence in the St Gall image suggests the unity of the whole Church drawn from the four corners of the earth to which they and their successors had taken the Gospel. Christ set the completion of the universal mission as the pre-condition for the *parousia*: 'And this gospel of the kingdom

bishop of Lindisfarne in the time of Aidan and Cuthbert, *Ecclesiastical History of the English people*, 1.27, 4.27, ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1969) 80, 434.

166 Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum*, 1, 1.2; 2.3; ed. Wehrich, *CSEL* 43, 2–4. In the *ordinarium missae* of the Stowe Missal, fol. 13, there is an additional shortened litany in which Mark and Luke are added to the names of ten of the apostles, who include Paul, *Stowe Missal*, 2, 3.

167 J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian doctrines*, fifth edn. (New York 1977) 44, 60.

168 Rufinus, *Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum*, PL 21, 335–80 at 337, for the tradition that, after the Ascension, each apostle contributed a clause of the creed so that when scattered in diverse places they would not give divergent teaching. See Bede, *Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah*, Bk II, p. 132 on the first stopping-place on the road out from Babylon – 'showing them the beginning of a new way of life that leads those who have been freed from the devil to the heavenly kingdom [...] for in this very month too their fathers were led out of Egypt by Moses to signify this same meaning for a new way of life. But when to these same hearers of the new life we hand over the creed of the faith, which was composed by the twelve apostles and consists of as many statements, we in a sense stop at the first resting-place for 12 days and only then continue on the journey to the promised Land which we have begun when we show them that the path of virtues, whereby we arrive at life, must be entered through accepting knowledge of the faith'.

169 Bede, *De templo*, 2, ed. D. Hurst, *CCSL* 119A, 200, ll. 318–34.

170 See further É. Ó Carragáin, 'The city of Rome and the world of Bede', Jarrow Lecture 1994, 4–5.

shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations: and then shall the consummation come' (Matthew 24:14).¹⁷¹ In the St Gall Gospels the twelve apostles all hold Gospel books depicted like those held, and with exactly the same gesture, by the angels attending the crucified Christ on the facing page and by the four evangelists before the gospel openings. The Gospel book itself is a major recurring image in the programme of illumination.

The apostles have first place in St Paul's list of the variety of members and functions divinely set up in the body of Christ which is the Church (1 Corinthians 12: 27–28). In the context of the Pauline metaphor of the diverse roles of the limbs or members of the one body of Christ, the fathers variously described the apostles as the feet of the Lord, sent through all the lands of the earth, or as the bones and strength of his body, or as the chest of the body, closest to the head.

The completeness and universality represented by the number twelve was a key element in patristic exegesis, however, and the apostles were also widely used to denote the whole Church.¹⁷² Augustine repeatedly speaks of the Church as spread over the four quarters of the whole world, east, west, north and south, as is shown by the apostles, whose number is divisible into four parts of three each.¹⁷³ This numerology was frequently related to the Trinitarian baptismal formula uniquely contained in Christ's instructions for the world-wide mission in Matthew 28:19. Describing the foundational role of the Apostles in the Church on earth, Augustine also noted eschatological and cosmological scriptural references to their sacred number: there are twelve thrones reserved for the apostles judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28) and the names of the apostles are inscribed on the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem, as the names of the twelve tribes are inscribed on its twelve gates (Revelation 21:12, 14). Further, as Scripture frequently foretells, the Church is called from the four quarters of the globe and it is called from every side in the name of the Trinity, by baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).¹⁷⁴ Gregory used the same approach, and promoted the idea of twelve as a sign of perfection, when expounding the same key text.¹⁷⁵

171 Augustine, Ep. 199.48, *Epistulae*, 4, 286–87.

172 Augustine, *City of God*, XX.5 – 'we are not to imagine there will be only twelve men associated with him as judges, simply because he says that they will sit on twelve thrones. For by the number twelve is symbolized a kind of universal character in the multitude of those judging . . .'

173 [See Augustine, *In iohannis evangelium, Tractatus* 118.4, CCSL 36, p. 431 where the number of the apostles is linked with the fourfold division of Christ's garment, the four quarters of the world and the unity of the seamless robe which gathers all into one.] 'The theory of number is not to be lightly regarded, since it is made quite clear, in many passages of the holy Scriptures, how highly it is to be valued. It was not for nothing that it was said in praise of God: 'You have ordered all things in measure, number and weight' (Wisdom 11:21).

174 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 86.4, ed. D.E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, CCSL 38–40, 1201–1202.

175 Gregory, *Moralia*, 1, 14, 19, CCSL 143, p. 34, ll. 22–25. *Vnde sancti apostoli, quia Trinitatem in quatuor partibus mundi praedicare mittebantur, duodecim sunt electi, ut etiam numero perfectionem ostenderent quam uita et uoce praedicarent.*

Arator's influential verse paraphrase *De Actibus Apostolorum* had also emphasised the significance of the number twelve for the apostolic mission:

The world is divided into four regions. It is summoned by the three-fold faith, in whose name it is cleansed in the spring, therefore if we multiply four three times we calculate the whole picture which the twelve-fold rank encompassed: a mystical reason compelled the dutiful disciples, to whom this baptism was commanded (Matthew 28:19), to regain their former number.

(Acts 1:15–26)¹⁷⁶

This numerological interpretation of twelve was very familiar to Insular commentators. The Irish Reference Bible, which has a whole section on the apostles, refers to the number of months in the completeness of the year, the twelve hours of light in the day, and cryptically cites biblical examples of the number's importance. The number of the apostles is signified in the twelve sons of Jacob (*xii vero patriarche xii apostolos significat*), in the camps of the twelve tribes sited around the tabernacle, the twelve bronze oxen supporting the laver in the temple, the twelve gates of the heavenly city. The fourfold world and its threefold division (meaning the three continents) are related to the four gospels and the Trinity, to which they testify, and specifically to Christ's commission to the disciples at the end of Matthew's gospel, *Euntes ergo nunc docete omnes gentes*. The work itemises in stenographic form what is symbolically contained in the number twelve, the full complement of the apostolic mission, namely the four gospel books, the faith in the Trinity, the four parts of the world.¹⁷⁷

Bede, commenting on the calling and sending out of the twelve apostles (Mark 3: 13–14), expanded some of the same references:

By their number they underlined the grace of a specific mystery, namely the salvation of the world that they were to preach by their words. For three times four makes twelve. And the apostles were sent out to preach in four groups of three, to baptize people in all four corners of the world, *in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit*. (Matthew 28:19). Thus was it written of the holy city of Jerusalem, as it came down from God in heaven, that it had three gates in the east, three in the north, three in the south and three in the west (Apocalypse 21:2, 12–14). This showed, figuratively, that by the preaching of the apostles and their successors throughout the world, all nations would enter the Church, through faith in the Holy Trinity. And so it was, in accord with

176 R. Hillier, *Arator on the Acts of the Apostles. A Baptismal Commentary* (Oxford 1993) 41.

177 Paris, B.N. ms lat. 11561, fols. 132, 183v–88. See digitised facsimile of the manuscript, Gallica, as in note 50.

the same mystery, that the sons of Israel camped around the tabernacle, in order to cover the entire area in four groups of three tribes (Numbers 2:3–31); for in fact the primitive Church that circled every part of Judea was the spiritual camp of God that would be established through faith in, and confession of, the Holy Trinity, once all nations throughout the world believed.¹⁷⁸

The biblical and patristic interpretative traditions underlying such Insular texts received visual expression in Insular manuscripts. In differing ways the inscribed diagram of the twelve tribes of Israel camped in groups of three around the four sides of the tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus, produced in Wearmouth-Jarrow before 716, and the diagram showing the names of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles inscribed around the four sides of the heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh, c. 807, may be read as images of Christ and his body the Church on earth and in heaven, founded on the twelve apostles and spiritually prefigured in the ‘primitive church’ of the twelve tribes of Israel.¹⁷⁹

In his early commentary on the Apocalypse Bede, following Primasius and Tyconius, expounded the prophetic significance of the names of the eponymous ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:4–5) and noted that the Church ‘is often symbolized by the number twelve, because it dwells throughout the fourfold sphere [of the world] in the faith of the holy Trinity’;¹⁸⁰ as in several of his later works, he additionally emphasised that ‘Twelve apostles were elected to preach this faith to the world, symbolizing in this number the mystery of their work’.¹⁸¹

Speaking elsewhere of the twelve apostles and twelve tribes, Bede again observed, ‘it is often the custom in the scriptures for totality to be designated by the number twelve’.¹⁸² His *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, like Arator’s influential verse paraphrase of Acts, explains that the number of the apostles was restored to twelve ‘so that through two parts of six each (for three times four is twelve) they might preserve by an eternal number the grace which they were preaching by word’. Those who were to preach the faith of the holy Trinity to the four parts of the world, in line with the Lord’s saying, ‘Go, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 28:19), might thereby show ‘the perfection of the work by the sacramental sign (*sacramentum*) of their number as well’.¹⁸³

178 In *Marcum*, I, CCSL 120, 469–70, lines 1276–92: *Certi utique gratia mysterii ut uidelicet mundi salutem quam uerbo praedicarent suo quoque numero commendarent . . .*

179 Jennifer O’Reilly, ‘The library of Scripture: views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow’, *New offerings, ancient treasures*, ed. P. Binski and W. Noel (Stroud 2001) 3–39: 30–34, figs. 2, 8.

180 Cf. Bede, *In Lucam* 2 (1270–1277); *In Marcum* 1 (1278–1281); *De tabernaculo* 3 (112.752–55); *De templo* 2 (210.715–25).

181 F. Wallis, p. 150, notes 280, 281.

182 Bede, *Hom* 1.13, 126.

183 Bede, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, 11–12.

In the St Gall Gospels the depiction of the twelve apostles displays the sacramental sign of their number in a very marked way. They are shown in four groups of three, symmetrically arranged in two ordered horizontal rows. In each of the two rows of six apostles, three apostles have their heads tilted up towards Christ from the left and hold their Gospel books in the right hand, and three look up from the right, holding their books in the left hand.

The impression is of a closely unified community looking at the large half-length figure of Christ, flanked by angels, in the upper register.¹⁸⁴ Read in the light of the exegetical traditions sketched here, the image conveys a sense of the Church as the one body of Christ, which will be joined with its heavenly head.

Augustine, citing St Paul's description of Christ as the head of the Church and 'the saviour of the body' (cf. Ephesians 5:23), emphasised that 'we are limbs of that head. The body cannot be deprived of its head; if the head is in glory for ever, so are the limbs'. He argued that the head of the body is in heaven, its members on earth, and that at the Ascension the head went before as an assurance that the members of the body would follow.¹⁸⁵ Meanwhile, members of the body on earth are to serve him and grow in unity and likeness to him. Gregory the Great used part of the chain of New Testament texts on this image in his layered exposition of Ezekiel's vision of the four symbols of the evangelists to reveal Christ, who through his incarnate body achieved immortality for humanity and in his ecclesial body brings them to perfection.¹⁸⁶ The members of his Church, like the chest, arms and hands of the body, are to grow together and become bound to him so that 'the entire body is perfected, like the holy apostles, because they stood near to our Saviour, as the chest cleaved to the head'. Likewise, all the various

184 The more complex image in the Book of Kells, fol. 202v, shows the half-length figure of Christ above the temple, set over numerous small bust-length male figures of similar type, arranged in two close-packed groups, each of three rows; each group is seen in profile, looking inwards from right or left. The positioning of the Kells image in the Gospel text has suggested its interpretation in terms of biblical and patristic uses of the metaphors of the body and the living temple to describe Christ and the Church. In this connection Carol Farr discusses the *figura* of 'Christ, the head, and his body, the Church' as the first of the rules in Tyconius's handbook on biblical interpretation, *Liber regularum*, summarised by Augustine in *De doctrina christiana*, and cites examples of its use by Augustine, Bede and Irish commentators: C.A. Farr, *The Book of Kells, its function and audience* (London 1997) 66–75, 91–92. The twelve apostles are not depicted in the Kells image, although there are some iconographic parallels with the St Gall Gospels' image of the half-length figure of Christ flanked by angels with rows of small figures arranged below him. The monastic community in which Kells was produced, representing the universal Church founded by the apostles, is perhaps evoked in the 'living stones' pictured in the orderly rows of little figures.

185 *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 89, 5; 90, 2.14, *CCSL* 39, 1269–70. Also Leo the Great on the Ascension, 'the hope of the body is raised, whither the glory of the head has gone before', *Sermo* 73.4, ed. A. Chavasse, *CCSL* 138A, 452–53.

186 New Testament texts on the body of Christ include Romans 12: 4–5; Ephesians 2:14–22, 4: 1–16; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, 12:4–31; Colossians 1:18–22, 2:9–20, 3:14–15.

other members of the Church, as members of Christ's body, are to grow through spiritual nourishment and good works (cf. Colossians 2:19) 'until we all meet [. . .] unto a perfect man, into the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4: 11, 13).¹⁸⁷

Columbanus expertly used the same Pauline metaphor and texts in urging the need to maintain the Gospel and follow the commands of Christ, *omnium caput* (Ephesians 1:22), 'like single harmonious members of one body'. Referring to the different functions of the members he cited, for example, Jerome's exhortation that bishops in particular should imitate the apostles, but he called on all to be mindful of their role as joint members of the body, to preserve peace, charity and unity, and so hasten in their spiritual growth to become like Christ: *in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Iesu Christi* (Ephesians 4:13).¹⁸⁸ He also used texts from the chain in stating that the belief in the oneness and unity of Christ required the spiritual growth and unity of the members of his body: 'For we, in respect of the unity of the person, in whom it pleased the fullness of deity to reside bodily (Colossians 2:9), believe one Christ, his divinity and humanity, "since he who descended is himself he who ascended above every heaven that he might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:10)'.¹⁸⁹ Bede, in Homily II.18 on the Octave of Pentecost and his commentary on Revelation, discusses the Ascension in similar terms.¹⁹⁰

The final double opening in the St Gall Gospels juxtaposes Christ's earthward descent and heavenly ascent. The arrangement of the apostles recalls the Ascension and the promise that Christ will come again in like manner. The trumpeting angels and the standard of the cross held by Christ signal the fulfilment of that promise at his coming in glory and the prospect of the union of all the faithful with him. Like Augustine, Leo the Great and other commentators had stressed that by Christ's Ascension 'the hope of the body is raised, whither the glory of the

187 Jerome, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, 1.6, ed. Adriaen, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, CCSL 142, p. 8.

188 Columbanus, Ep. 2.8, ed. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, 20–21, ll. 30–33; 22–23, ll. 16–20.

189 *qui descendit ipse est, qui ascendit super omnes caelos, ut adimpleret omni* (Ephesians 4:10, 17–18; cf. Galatians 2:11): Columbanus, Ep. 5.13, ed. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, 52–53, ll. 10–13; also 50–51, ll. 24–28, citing Ephesians 2:14.

190 Bede, Hom II.18, 182–83: 'This too we must ask, why was it said, *And no one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven* (John 3:13)? All the elect are truly confident that they will ascend into heaven, according to the Lord's promise that *Where I am, there will my servant be also* (John 12:26). Yet a very clear argument unties the knot of this question – namely that the Mediator between God and human beings, the human being Jesus Christ, is the head of all the elect; likewise all the elect are members of this head, as the apostle says, *And he made him head over everything for the Church* (Ephesians 1:22), and again, *For you are the body of Christ, member for member* (1 Colossians 12:27). No one, then, *has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven* (John 3:13). *No one* [that is] *has ascended into heaven except* Christ in his [human] body, which is the Church. He first of all ascended in his own being, in the sight of the apostles, his most eminent members; after that, by ascending daily in his members, he gathers himself [together] in heaven'. Bede, Commentary on Revelation 21:21, Wallis p. 278.

head has gone before'. Furthermore, 'after the Ascension the faith of the apostles was no longer hindered by the barrier of corporeal sight and they were better able to lift their minds' gaze to the contemplation of Christ's divinity'; Leo urged the faithful to do likewise.¹⁹¹ Gregory the Great said that, although the faithful on earth cannot look directly on Christ, they can come to him when the eye of their understanding is opened to see that his servants, the holy apostles, who shine with virtues, are bathed in his light and that, by loving God and neighbour, they too can walk by his light on earth without stumbling and reach the holy community of heavenly citizens.¹⁹²

Early medieval images frequently evoke the concept of spiritual seeing or recognition and may promote an experience of it, but the idea is conveyed in a unique way in the facing images with which the St Gall Gospels close. The apostles behold the vision of the risen, ascended and glorified Christ with their faces all upturned at the same acute angle as the faces of the spear-bearer and the sponge-holder who look up at the crucified Christ in the adjoining scene. The viewer is drawn by the healing line of blood from Christ's wound to follow the gaze of Longinus's healed eye and recognise the divinity as well as the humanity of Christ. On the facing page one of the apostles at the centre of the upper row, without shifting the angle of his head, directs his glance outwards, inviting the viewer to join in the contemplation of Christ in his risen body and in the glory of his divinity. The faithful are to look on these things with the inner eye in preparation for the heavenly life, when corporeal signs and symbols will no longer be necessary. Both visually and thematically the two images form a diptych. Positioned at the very end of the book, it is the culmination of a sustained Christological sequence of illumination.

In summary

The decoration and layout of the opening six pages of the St Gall Gospels mark the first coming of Christ at the Incarnation, prophesied through his Old Testament human ancestors listed by Matthew in the genealogy, which is laid out as a separate and arcane text. The announcement of Christ's human birth is heavily embellished at the *nomen sacrum* of Matthew 1:18, but its cosmological signs of the *chi*, the cross and the lozenge also evoke the divine Word; his fourfold creation and exalted cross are figured in the quaternities and cruciform design of the facing carpet page. The small, square-framed stepped cross motif, which is particularly striking in the ornament of the *chi-rho* and its facing carpet page, appears again at the four corners of the frame of the Crucifixion.

The four aspects of Christ's identity – his humanity and divinity, his kingship and priesthood – and the mystery of redemption brought about through his Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension, which patristic and Insular

191 Leo, *Sermo* 73.4, *Sermo* 74.3, *CCSL* 138A, 457–58.

192 Gregory, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 30, ed. R. Étaix, *CCSL* 141, 265–67.

tradition related to the fourfold nature of the Gospel, are represented by the portraits of the four evangelists and their symbols at the four Gospel incipits. The two-page openings of each gospel are presented as individually distinct yet unified, an effect achieved through a range of techniques, including the diversity and harmony of quadripartite ornament in which Christological signs are both displayed and concealed. Following the final words of Matthew's gospel, the depiction of all four evangelist symbols on the portrait page of Mark visually recalls the revelation of Christ in the fourfold gospel which was taken at his command by the apostles to the four corners of the earth.

The present commentary has suggested the differing ways in which the standing evangelists, Mark and John, may be seen as Christ-bearing figures, but the image of Christ is also imprinted on Matthew and Luke. The youthful head of Luke, the curls and knotted skeins of golden hair, though frontally viewed, share the features of the crucified Christ. The strongly etched nose and beard-line of the ascended Christ at his return (p. 267) appear in the face of Matthew, the ogee-shaped curve of whose headgear precisely repeats the curve of Christ's hairline. The sense that all the faithful are members of Christ, called to be like him and to be with him, is expressed in the final image of the whole Church, represented by the twelve apostles, as the one body of Christ.

The complementary images of Crucifixion and Second Coming close the book and offer a pictorial summation of the Gospel revelation of the humanity and divinity of Christ, his saving death and resurrection, his continuing invisible presence in the sacraments which issued from his wounded side, and the promise to those who would be like him of sharing in his risen life. The two images of Crucifixion and Second Coming do not simply describe a past and a future event but make their spiritual reality present to the inner eye of the viewer. The diptych affirms belief, but is also potentially transformative in showing the hope of eternal life offered by Christ in overcoming death on the cross and a vision of its final realisation for all who follow the Gospel faith and practice handed on by the apostles.

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